

dominean monastic



search

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH

VOLUME 4

NOVEMBER, 1985

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is published by the Conference of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers of the United States of America. The Conference is an organization of independent monasteries whose purpose is to foster the monastic contemplative life of the nuns in the spirit of Saint Dominic.

PRESIDENT

Sister Mary of God, O.P. (North Guilford)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sister Mary Catherine, O.P., Coordinator (Elmira)

Sister Mary Martin, O.P. (Summit)

Sister Mary of Jesus, O.P. (Bronx)


Business Management: Sister Mary of the Immaculate Conception, O.P. (West Springfield)
Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P.

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is a spiritual and theological review written by the nuns. Its purpose is to foster the Dominican monastic contemplative life by the sharing of insights gained from study and prayer. It is published once a year as a service to the nuns. It is also available to the wider Dominican Family and others upon request, from whom a donation of \$4.00 to aid in the cost of printing would be appreciated, when possible.

Contributions to this review should be researched and prepared with concern for literary and intellectual quality. Manuscripts submitted should be clearly typed, single spaced, on one side of the paper only. The deadline for manuscripts is October 1st of each year. Minor editing will be done at the discretion of the editors. If major changes are desired, these will be effected in dialogue with the authors. The editors, in consultation with the Conference Council, reserve the right to reject inappropriate manuscripts, though reasons will be given to the authors with courtesy and encouragement. The Open Forum section is offered to those nuns who would like the opportunity to express their ideas briefly and informally, and to encourage dialogue among the nuns on spiritual subjects. Each separate contribution to Open Forum should be limited to approximately 500 words.

All book reviews and poetry should be sent to Sister Mary of Jesus (Bronx). Open Forum contributions should be sent to Sister Mary Martin (Summit). All other articles should be sent to Sister Mary Catherine (Elmira).





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2012 with funding from
CARLI: Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois

<http://archive.org/details/dominicanmonasti04unse>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Florilegia on Saint Augustine's Letter 211	5
Sr. Maria Rose, O.P. (Summit)	
On the Love of God and Neighbor	17
Sr. Mary of Christ, O.P. (Los Angeles)	
Augustinian Themes in Our Basic Constitution	21
Sr. Mary of the Precious Blood, O.P. (Buffalo)	
Intimate Encounter	23
Sr. Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P. (West Springfield)	
Comparative Study on Regular Observance	24
Sr. Mary of the Annunciation, O.P. (Lufkin)	
Study in the Dominican Tradition	39
Sr. Mary of Jesus, O.P. (Bronx)	
Autumn Scene (Poem)	46
Sr. Mary Regina, O.P. (West Springfield)	
The Role of Solitude in Dominican Contemplative Life	47
Sr. Mary Bernard, O.P. (Summit)	
Truth	53
Sr. Mary Joseph, O.P. (Los Angeles)	
The Father's Word (Poem)	55
Sr. Mary of the Holy Spirit, O.P.	
Communio and Missio	56
Sr. Mary Thomas, O.P. (Buffalo)	
In the Garden of Tomorrow (Poem)	60
Sr. Mary Rose Dominic, O.P. (Summit)	
A Trilogy	61
Sr. Mary Margaret, O.P. (Buffalo)	
Mary's Answer (Poem) ^t	67
Sr. Regina Marie, O.P. (Syracuse)	
The Sanctity of Curupira	68
Sr. Marie Damien, O.P. (Brazil)	
Curupira's Rosary	70
Translated by Sr. Mary of the Trinity, O.P. (Lufkin)	

A Suitable Place (Homily: Blessing of Washington Monastery)	73
Rev. Augustine DiNoia, O.P.	
Father Vicaire on Contemplative Life: Report	77
Sr. Myriam, O.P. (Zelem, Belgium)	
Joseph	81
Sr. Mary of the Assumption, O.P. (West Springfield)	
The Eternal Now of the Liturgy	85
Mother Mary William, O.P. (Lufkin)	
The Hidden Life	90
Translated by Sr. Mary of the Holy Cross, O.P. (Buffalo)	
The Fear of the Lord is Our Cross	92
Sr. Mary Catherine, O.P. (Elmira)	
Our Lady of Guadalupe (Poem)	97
Sr. Mary Joseph, O.P. (Los Angeles)	
Elizabeth of the Trinity and the Interior Castle	98
Sr. Mary Emily, O.P. (Lufkin)	
Reading and Prayer	112
Translated by Sr. Mary Regina, O.P. (West Springfield)	

BOOK REVIEWS

The Beatitudes: Soundings in Christian Tradition - Tugwell, O.P. . .	123
Sr. Mary Thomas, O.P. (Buffalo)	
The Summit Choirbook	123
Sr. Mary Magdalen, O.P. (Farmington Hills)	
The Way of the Heart - Nouwen	124
Sr. Maria Rose, O.P. (Summit)	
Ways of Imperfection - Tugwell, O.P.	125
Sr. Maria Rose, O.P. (Summit)	

OPEN FORUM

A Glance at the Charism of Headship	127
Sr. Mary Rose, O.P. (West Springfield)	
Holy Scripture in Our Life	128
Sr. Mary of the Holy Spirit, O.P. (Menlo Park)	
The Eucharist Outside the Mass	129
Sr. Mary Joseph, O.P. (Los Angeles)	

EDITORIAL

The author of the Book of Proverbs exhorts us to that search for wisdom which is such a prominent monastic attitude as he tells us:

"If you seek her like silver
and like hidden treasure search her out:
Then will you understand the fear of the Lord:
the knowledge of God you will find" (Prov. 2:4-5).

As Nuns of the Order of Preachers we are dedicated in a particular way to that search for wisdom, a wisdom gained through study, especially of the Word of God, and the prayer and discipline of life which flow out of it. We are also called to share that wisdom with one another in simplicity.

A glance through the offerings in this issue of DMS brings the above thoughts spontaneously to mind. These contributions represent that life-long inner search for wisdom, and also the joy of sharing the insights received. The themes are so varied that at first they seemed to defy any order, but slowly the lines fell into place.

The first three articles center on the thought of Saint Augustine: his Rule as expression of his spirituality, the principal tenet of the Rule as love of God and neighbor, and the Augustinian themes in our Basic Constitution. The next three deal with basic observances in Dominican monastic life: first, a comparative study of the observances in general as they are presented in the 1931 Constitutions in contrast to their presentation in the 1971 Constitutions; then, a historical overview of the place of study in the life of the nuns, followed by an examination of the role of solitude in Dominican life. After this, some characteristics of Dominican spirituality are considered: truth as it is understood in the light of Scripture; the communitarian and apostolic aspects of the Dominican way; and the challenge of our call to contemplative life in all its purity. At this point we take a look at the life of a modern Dominican Nun from a geographical locality growing in prominence: Curupira of Brazil and at a record of her rosary spirituality.

After these reflections on Dominican life presented by the nuns themselves, we insert two papers describing the thought of our brethren on our life: a homily on the occasion of the blessing of our Washington Monastery with a challenge to bring to life the Dominican ideal in that locality; followed by a detailed report on a workshop on Dominican contemplative life given by our well known historian, Father H.M. Vicaire to the Belgian monasteries. We are grateful to Sister Myriam of Zelem for preparing this report for us.

From here we turn our attention to more varied perspectives. There is an article on Saint Joseph as patron of contemplative life and of our Eastern Province. Then we "listen in" to a Chapter talk on the contemplative aspects of the liturgy, followed by two other recorded exhortations: one from Olmedo for the relatively recent occasion of the reception of a Nun to the habit; the other, much farther back in time, for the occasion of the admittance of a brother to Egyptian monastic life. Two concluding articles present other descriptions of monastic prayer and living: first, a penetrating study of the newly beatified Elizabeth of the Trinity as she exemplified the Carmelite spirituality described by St. Teresa in the Interior Castle; and finally, a translation from the French of an old article with a strikingly modern thrust concerning reading and prayer in monastic life.

Wisdom's banquet fare is rich, indeed. We eat but are never satiated because the knowledge of God is the contemplative's ever expanding desire and goal. For us as Christians and Dominicans that wisdom is contained primarily in the Word of God personified in Jesus Christ. We are ever striving to be among those who "allow the seed which is the word of God to grow in (us) by the power of the Holy Spirit; and collaborating with it are renewed interiorly and more and more conformed to Christ" (Const. #108). We trust that this Word will continue to grow within each of us not only by pondering it in our own hearts but by sharing that fruitful pondering with one another by the written word in future issues of DMS. This is one of the ways in which God, who has begun a good work, will bring it to perfection.

Sister Mary Catherine, O.P.
Elmira

"May the Lord grant that
as lovers of the beauty of the spiritual life
and breathing forth the sweet odor of Christ
in the holiness of your ways,
You may faithfully observe these things,
not like slaves under the bondage of the law
but like children
free in the liberty
of divine grace."

Rule of St. Augustine

FLORILEGIA ON SAINT AUGUSTINE'S LETTER 211

Sister Maria Rose, O.P.
Summit Monastery

Introduction

The practice of writing during *lectio divina* has been part of the prayer tradition of the Church. Writing a *lectio* journal is one way of ruminating or "chewing the cud" by going back to the text that one has jotted down. For the early monks and nuns, to internalize is to verbalize. They gleaned the fruits of their holy reading in a mosaic of scriptural quotations and doctrinal excerpts called florilegia or "culled flowers".

The florilegia is a literary genre that originated in the Greek and Latin classical schools. These are collections of doctrinal gems for the purpose of quaestio and disputatio. The compilers used these materials for study and research. Later on, the florilegia flourished in the monastic school of *lectio divina*. The ancient monks adopted it as a creative growth tool for wholeness and depth in their prayer life. This type of journaling harmonized with the silence and solitude of cloistered life.

These collections are called sententiae, extracts, excerpts or scarapsus. Peter Lombard's famous sentences are an example of this. Poetic titles are also used: "Flores", "Book of Sparklets", "Floral Bouquet", "Deflorationes" and others. The *lectio* journal bears this flower symbolism, a medieval metaphor for bees sipping honey from flower to flower.

In this article, we are going to concern ourselves with journaling within the context of listening to the word being addressed to us in the Letter 211 of Saint Augustine. The eight florilegia correspond to the eight principal precepts in that letter. The key sentences are underlined, and interwoven with these are verbal citations from Scripture as well as allusions and extracts from Saint Augustine's numerous works. This approach aims to arouse interest, and perhaps, point out to others a field of Augustinian studies that would yield fruit in prayer.

Letter 211, the best known and most controversial of Saint Augustine's letters, has been commonly called the "Rule". This letter is addressed to a convent of women who had set up a strife against their Superior, Mother Felicitas, who had succeeded Saint Augustine's sister upon the latter's death. There is a broad hint in the beginning of this letter that the source of the conflict was a new chaplain, Brother Rusticus. The English title given to this letter is "Letter of Aurelius Augustine to the consecrated virgins", dated 423. There is no title of address in the text.

Technically, Letter 211 is not a religious rule. It is possible that there was already an existing Rule before this letter was written. However, Letter 211 is always referred to as the "Regula Sororum" written by Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

The florilegia is an attempt to show the general spirit and character of the Rule. The spirituality of Saint Augustine is based on the revealed word of God. His thought and language are shot through with scriptural citations and allusions, which shows his intimate knowledge of the Bible, as well as the influence of Egyptian monasticism. In the realm of theology, Saint Augustine drew on Neoplatonic philosophy in order to explain the gradual movement of man from the material to the spiritual, and from the temporal to the eternal.

Letter 211 is remarkable for its beauty, simplicity and adaptability. It is, in fact, the core and interiorization of law, whereby the ascesis of monastic life is presented by Augustine as a victory over self-seeking for the upbuilding of Christian community. The letter has heart-expanding dimension; it is a protest against pride, greed and power (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-35). Direction is given between I and We, and between person and community. For Augustine, the primary motive of community is fidelity to God's word, once a person freely chooses to live the reality of commitment (Chapters 1 and 8). One commits oneself to the Word by yielding to another or to others a claim on oneself (Chapters 5 and 7). Pride is deeply entrenched at the centre of our rational nature. Pride survives even when all other vices have been cornered. Renunciation of goods is rooted in dispossession of self and in humility (Chapters 1 and 7). In Chapter 5, the image of the members of one Body comes up to illustrate the duty of mutual help (Ephesians 22:2). Active service, for Augustine, builds up the earthly city; it must also nourish love. The most generous and gifted person is not the one who performs the greatest number of tasks, but rather the one who gives the most of herself to others (Mark 12:41-44). For Augustine, prayer cannot be separated from community, charity, asceticism and justice (Peter 3: 6-7; Matthew 17:21).

Saint Augustine was an original thinker and lover. His Letter 211 and his other writings - Confession, sermons, treatises - show his sensus catholicus, that is to say, the essentials of our faith. He united heart and mind in his endless search for God.

FLORILEGIUM 1 The Basic Ideal: Acts 4:31-35

The main purpose for your having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God, in oneness of mind and heart.

How good and pleasant it is when sisters live in unity; through the fire of love they are of one mind and one heart on the way to God (1). Those who live in unity in such a way that they form but one Person are rightly called "monos" - one single person. They fulfill in their lives what is written, "of one mind and one heart", that is, many bodies but not many minds, many bodies but not many hearts (2). Many upright people have only one heart, while a single deceitful person has a double heart (3). Love then, must join you together, so that you may follow the One in unity, and not fall back into multiplicity and be divided among many things (4).

How we wish to arrange our life, and how with God's help we are already doing so, is known to many of you from Sacred Scripture. None the less, in order to refresh your memory, listen and meditate on these words: "There was no one who called any of his possessions his own property. On the contrary, they owned everything in common". A nun no longer seeks her own interests, but she serves the interests of Jesus Christ. She now lives in the community of those who are of one mind and one heart on the way to God, such that no one can still speak of her own possessions, but all own goods in common (5). For if a person loves the whole, then everyone who possesses anything has something for herself. Take envy away, and what I have is yours; take envy away and what you have is mine. Possess God and you possess the All (6). I would wish that you place yourself with all your love under Christ, and that you follow no other way in order to reach and to attain the truth than that which has already been paved by Him who, as God, knows the weakness of our steps. This way is, in the first place, humility; in the second place, humility; in the third place, humility (7).

Let all of you, then, live together in oneness of mind and heart, mutually honoring God in yourselves, whose temples you have become. For you are his temple, collectively, and as individuals. God wishes to dwell in the union of all and in each person (8).

FLORILEGIUM 2 Prayer and Community

Be assiduous in prayer at the hours and times appointed. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; be persevering in your prayers and be thankful as you stay awake to pray (Colossians 3:16; 4:2).

At certain times, we call our spirit back to prayer from the other cares and activities, which, in some way cloud our yearning for God. Longing is always at the root of prayer, even though the tongue is silent (1). At particular hours, we pray to God with words that through these verbal signs of divine reality, we may impel ourselves to greater effort, help ourselves become aware of how much progress we have made in this desire and rouse ourselves to grow in it with greater vitality (2). Therefore, your conversation with God should focus on what you bear in your hearts, on the attention of your spirit, on a pure love and honest yearning. It is with words that Our Lord has taught us these essential things (3). To pray for a longer time is not the same as to pray by multiplying words. Lengthy talk is one thing; a prayerful disposition which lasts a long time is another. Did not Our Lord give us an example of this? In time He prays when it is appropriate; and in eternity, He hears our prayers with the Father (4).

When the Apostle says, "pray without ceasing", he means this: desire unceasingly that life of happiness which is nothing if eternal, and ask of Him who alone is able to give us this life (5). The desire of your heart is itself your prayer. The constancy of your desire will itself be the ceaseless voice of your prayer. And that voice of your prayer will be silent only when your love ceases. The chilling of the heart means that the heart is silent, while the burning love is the outcry of the heart that is constantly fixed on God (6).

When you pray to God, therefore, let the words spoken by your lips be alive in your hearts. Live what you pray. Sing to the Lord a new song. His praise is in the assembly of His chosen ones. It is in the singers themselves. If you desire, then, to praise Him, then live what you sing. Live good lives and you yourselves will be His praise (7).

FLORILEGIUM 3 Mutual Health Care

Subdue the flesh, so far as your health permits, by fasting and abstinence from food and drink. While we are on a journey in this mortal life, we are being weighed down by the demands of an earthly existence. The body has its revolts which are manifest and are oftentimes dangerous to the spirit, for the flesh is still corruptible (Galatians 5:17); it has not yet had its resurrection (1).

The mind tends upwards; it is caught up by love, but it is slowed down by weight (Wisdom 9:15). We lighten our load or cast off the ballast of this earthly baggage when we fast (2).

However, do not think that the flesh is at odds with the spirit as if there were one creator of the flesh and another of the spirit. It is true that "the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh" (I Cor. 15:53), and it is also true, and even more important to say that "no one ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as also Christ does the Church" (I Galatians 5:17). Both views are in harmony (3).

Remember also: there is no value in fasting unless one gives to the poor what is thereby saved (4). For, whom do you seek to please by your fasting? Will your fast be approved by God when you do not recognize your neighbor? I do not ask from what food you abstain, but what food you choose. Do you hunger and thirst for justice (5)?

Let not your mouths alone take nourishment but let your hearts, too, hunger for the Word of God. Therefore, since there is an earthly food on which the weakness of the flesh feeds, there is also a heavenly food by which the devotion of the mind is nourished. The earthly food belongs to the physical life; the heavenly food, to the life of the Spirit (6).

Each of you must do what she can. If one person is not capable of as much as another, then she can still attain it in the other who is more able. You have to render an account to God alone. The only thing that you owe to one another is mutual and abiding love (7).

To leave the world behind: this means to renounce what you have and what you desire to have. Greater possessions do not slake people's thirst but increase it. Such people despise a cup of water because they want to have a whole stream. Therefore, consider as rich the person who is least consumed by desire for material goods (8).

FLORILEGIUM 4 Mutual Responsibility in Good and Evil

You should not seek to please by your apparel but by a good life. Seek no advantage for yourselves when you aim to please men. We want to take our joy in men, and we rejoice when they take pleasure in what is good, not because this exalts us, but because it benefits them (1).

A new commandment I give you, that you love one another. From the entire human race throughout the world, this love gathers together into one body a new people, to be the bride of God's only Son. She is the bride of whom it is asked in the Song of Songs: "Who is this who comes clothed in white?" White indeed are her garments, for she had been made new (2).

Let all your actions conform to your holy state of life. God is almighty and all-seeing; His eyes are on those who fear Him; every human action is known to Him (Sirach 15:18-19). Can He who made the ear not hear? Can He who formed the eye not see? (Psalm 94:9)

By mutual vigilance over one another will God who dwells in you, grant you His protection (2 Corinthians 6:16). Admonish one another so that the beginning of evil will not grow more serious but will be promptly corrected.

Do you scorn your Sister's wound? You see her heading for destruction, and you do nothing? Because you remain silent, you are worse than she is when she reproaches you (3).

You are not to administer correction until you have removed from your eye the beam of envy or malice or pretense, so that you may have clear vision to cast out the speck from the eye of your Sister. For then, you shall see that speck with the eye of the dove, the kind of eyes that are commended in the Spouse of Christ -- pure and without guile (4).

When you take disciplinary measures, gentleness ought not to fade from your heart. Indeed, who is more loving than a physician with a surgical knife in his hand? Of course, the person who has to undergo the operation weeps. The doctor is harsh on the wound, but only in order to heal the person. For, if you are too gentle on the wound, the person would perish (5).

By punishing the guilty one patiently, you give her a chance to repent (Wisdom 12:10). The punishment must be commensurate to the person's spiritual strength. How many people have become better because of correction and how many have turned out worse on its account? And what is one to do in this case: if you punish a certain person, she is lost; if you allow her wrongdoing to go unchecked, another person is corrupted by it? What darkness (6)! Or are you abusing God's infinite goodness, patience and generosity, not realizing that this goodness is meant to lead the sinner to repentance (Romans 2:4)? It is exceptional and good to love the sinner and, at the same time, disapprove the sin. And the more justified you are in hating the sin, the greater the love you have for the human nature deformed by it. The person who loves in this way persecutes wickedness, but his true motive is to free the person from the bondage of sin (7).

For God created the human being; love, therefore, the person created by God, not the faults that belong to the person. Even though you are sometimes obliged to take harsh action, do it out of love for the good of the other (8).

God is the ultimate judge. For though no one knows a man's innermost self except man's own spirit within him, yet there is something in a man which even his own spirit does not know. But God knows all of him, for He has made man. Make no effort, then, to conceal your wound from the Physician; all of us are in need of His mercy (9).

For, it is truly God who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills; He crowns you with love and compassion (Psalm 103:3, 5).

FLORILEGIUM 5 Active Love in Service of One Another

In loving your Sister and caring for her, you are on a journey. Where are you travelling if not to the Lord God, to Him whom you should love with your whole heart, your whole soul and your whole mind? You have not yet reached His presence, but you have your own Sister at your side. Support, then, this companion of your pilgrimage if you want to come into the presence of the one with whom you desire to remain forever (1).

It is not love's aim to serve only its own interests. Love is not self-seeking (I Corinthians 13:5). Love each other as much as Sisters should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. In the temporal necessities of life, something sublime and permanent reveals itself, namely, love (I Corinthians 13:31).

No one, therefore, will seek her own advantage in her work. Everything you do is for the service of the community, and you are to work with more zeal and enthusiasm than if each person were merely working for herself and her own interests. Love puts the interests of the community before personal advantage and not the other way round. The way of love is exalted above all other ways.

What a nun earns through her work, she should be willing to own in common with her Sisters. If she lacks anything, she must be prepared to be supplied with it from community property, following the words of the Apostle, whose precept and example she follows: "we must be as people who possess nothing, and yet, have everything" (2).

One must love and esteem in the other the gifts and skills which she herself does not possess. Thus, the person with fewer capabilities ought not to impede the person with more; neither should those who are more gifted put pressure on others who are capable of less (3).

Therefore, the degree to which you are concerned for the interests of the community rather than for your own, is the criterion by which you can judge how much progress you have made in love.

FLORILEGIUM 6 Love, Conflict and Reconciliation

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer (I John 3:15). Love is our life. If love is life, then hatred is death. When someone fears hating a person whom she loves, she, in fact, fears death; and this death is more merciless and more radical than the death of the body, for in this death, the soul itself is killed. Your Lord has given you assurance with the words: Do not fear those who kill the body. By their brutal cruelty such people kill a body; but by harbouring hatred you kill a soul. You have first killed your soul and then your Sister's (1).

Sisters who have insulted each other should forgive each other's trespasses (Matthew 6:12); if you fail to do this, your praying the Our Father is a lie. When the Lord says "you must forgive your brother from the heart", He did not add the words "from the heart" for nothing. Let us then daily and with a true heart pray the Our Father. And moreover, let us live our prayer. You enter into a covenant with God. The Lord your God says to you: "forgive, then I forgive you. If you do not forgive, then you, not I, uphold your guilt against yourself (2).

Perhaps you have offended someone and now wish to be reconciled. You wish to say: "Sister, forgive me for I have sinned against you". But, she has no wish to hear of forgiveness or to remit your debt. She should, however, be careful when she prays. If your conscience troubles you, then pray "Forgive us our trespasses"; but remember, the prayer does not end there. You do not want to forgive your Sister, and still have to say "as we forgive those who trespass against us". Or would you prefer not to utter these words? If you do not say them, however, you do not receive anything either. Or if you say them just for the sake of saying them, you are lying. Do say them then, but speak the truth and live lovingly for the other (3).

Be cautious of harsh words. Should you utter them, then do not be afraid to speak the healing word with the same mouth that caused the wound.

If you wish to receive mercy, be merciful before He comes; forgive one another and give of your abundance. Of whose mercy do you give if not from His? If you were to give from your own, it would be largess; but since you give of His, it is retribution. For what have you that you have not received? These are the sacrifices most pleasing to God: mercy, humility, praise, peace, charity (4).

Authentic self-love consists in loving one's neighbor. People must learn to love themselves by not loving themselves (5).

Blessed is the person that loves you, O God, and his friend in you, and his enemy for you. That person alone loses no one who is dear, if all are dear in God, for God is never lost (6).

FLORILEGIUM 7 Compassionate Love in Authority and Obedience

Obey you Superior as a mother. She is the one who watches over you, knowing that she has to render an account of you; make this a joy for her to do and not a source of grief. Otherwise you yourselves will be the losers (Hebrews 13:17).

Help her both by your prayers and by your obedience, for then, it will be a pleasure for her, not to preside over you, but to serve you (1).

By your loving obedience, therefore, you not only show compassion to yourselves, but also to your Superior. By pleasing God through your obedience, you show compassion to yourselves; seek distraction from your cares, console your heart, chase sorrow away; for sorrow has been the ruin of many (Sirach 30:24).

Your Superior should not think herself fortunate in having power to lord it over you; the first among you must be the least and the person who leads must serve the most (Luke 22:25-26). For the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45). Let her show herself an example of good works among you that the Word of God will not fall into disrepute (Titus 2:7).

She is to advise those who neglect their duties, give courage to those who are disheartened, support the weak and be patient with all (1 Thessalonians 5: 4). If there is virtue in one who obeys, there are also some for her who commands to observe: humility, patience, wisdom, prudence, discretion, charity and equity (2 Timothy 4:2).

And let her strive to be loved by you rather than to be feared, although both love and respect are necessary. For it is not the person of the Superior who has to be feared but the Word of God in her. Let her glory in God alone and if she is loved by you, let it be in the Lord and for the sake of the Lord (2). Your Superior is in the flesh. In herself, she is, when you think of it, simply a human being. But it is true, that you make her something more by giving her honor and respect; it is as if you are covering what is weak and lacking in her (3).

Always esteem her more highly than yourself; this holds true even in your relations among yourselves. Because you make her your Superior through free choice and commitment, God makes her the least of all, since she has been charged with the care of all (Philippians 2:3). And you must remember that even though she appears to address you from a higher place, yet in fear before God, she lies at your feet because of the great responsibility that her office requires of her (4). The most severe judgment will be set aside for those in high places (Wisdom 6:6). If much has been given to you, much will be demanded of you; more will be expected of one to whom more has been entrusted (Luke 12:48).

To love God, to live in goodness from the love which God has given us: this is the first act of charity which we can perform for ourselves. Authority and obedience go hand in hand in the context of mutual love (5).

You have been called to freedom. Do not, however, abuse it as a pretext for self-seeking. Serve one another through love. If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The signs of the Spirit's presence are love, joy, patience, kindness, generosity, faith, mildness and chastity.

FLORILEGIUM 8 Love is the Fulfillment of the Law

Observe the precepts in a spirit of charity and as lovers of spiritual beauty. The desire for spiritual beauty or the spirit of loving obedience is linked to the joy of contemplation. From divine beauty you go to Christ who surpasses everyone in beauty, but who, for your sake became a man of sorrows, without looks or beauty to attract the eyes. Likewise, you shall come to possess beauty by loving Him who always remains faithful. According as love grows in you, beauty grows too. For love is the beauty of the soul (1).

Live in such a way that you spread abroad the life-giving aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15). If there is anyone among you who wishes to be known for her wisdom and learning, she must prove such a claim by the excellence of her life (James 3:13).

Do not be weighed down like slaves straining under the law, but live as free persons under grace; for, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Love is the fulfillment of the law. Bear one another's burdens, and thus you will fulfill the law of Christ (Romans 6:14-22); for you are no longer under the law, which, while it commands the good, is unable to give it. On the contrary, you are under grace, which, in making you love what the law commands, can reign over you as free people (2). Love, holiness and freedom are the marks of Christian love in religious community life and in the person's quest for God (3).

Whoever listens to the word but does not obey it is like a man who looks at his own face in a mirror, and then, after a quick look, goes off and immediately forgets what he looked like. But whoever considers himself in the light of the perfect law of freedom, and makes that his habit - not listening and then forgetting, but actually putting it into practice - will be blessed for what he does (James 1:23-25).

Even your merits are God's gift. The good in you ought to be a cause for gratefulness (4). For those who love God, He works all things for good. And this "all" takes in so much that, even if a person deviates from and leaves the right path, she is enabled to make progress in good, for she returns more humble and more experienced. Let her prayer be: Forgive me my trespasses and lead me not into temptation (5).

Offer, then, your thanksgiving to the Lord your God, from whom every best and perfect gift comes, for He gives to those of good will both the desire and the fulfillment of things that belong to Him (6). Address Him thus: Behold, Lord, I cast upon You my concern that I may live, and I shall meditate on the wonders of Your law; though poor, I want to be filled with it in the company of those who eat and are filled; and they who seek the Lord shall praise Him (7).

CONCLUSION

This Augustinian florilegia is not an attempt to fix the lines for historical and spiritual exegeses of the Rule. This lectio journal is one form of listening to the word being addressed to us through biblical and monastic writers.

We have used Saint Augustine's Letter 211, the first written account of rules for female monastics. The legislator had established a monastery for women after his return from Italy to North Africa and had appointed his sister as Superior. The next Superior had problems with her subjects, and thus, Letter 211 was written.

The "gleanings" have been laid out according to their contextual message and affinity of themes. Through extracts from Saint Augustine's letters, treatises, sermons and his confession, we can draw deeper meaning from his Rule. We have followed the consistent rhythm of his "anima una et cor unum in Deo"

To this lectio journal can be added our personal reflections and responses. This would vary according to one's disposition, needs and background. The response may take the form of a letter, a dialogue, a prayer-poem or an art symbol. If our response is brought in willing obedience to the truth, then the word can penetrate our heart until we open up to the freedom of God. Our response would flow from who we are and into what we can become.

The Scriptures and the Fathers provide food for soul and light for life. A word or verse calls for reflection, lights up the heart, clears up a doubt, demands a renunciation or promises hope of moving closer to God. In order to preserve this graced moment, the reader can write down the inspired and inspiring word. At some time in the future, she might go back to this source of life for her spiritual strength and that of others. The florilegia are verbal witnesses to our monastic search for God.

* * * * *

NOTES

FLORILEGIUM I

- (1) Against Faustus 5, 9; cf. Psalm 133:1
- (2) Sermon on Psalm 132, 6
- (3) Sermon 11, 7; cf. I Corinthians 12:12
- (4) Sermon 284, 4
- (5) Sermon 356; cf. Acts 4:32-35; 2:44-45; Luke 14:26, 33; Matthew 16:24;
Also: Treatise on Manual Labour of Monks 32, 8
- (6) Sermon on St. John's Gospel 32, 8
- (7) Letter 118, 3, 22
- (8) The City of God 10, 3

FLORILEGIUM 2

- (1) Letter 130, 9, 18
- (2) Ibid
- (3) On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount, 2, 3, 13
- (4) Letter 130, 9, 18
- (5) Ibid; cf. Jeremiah 29:13; James 5:13-18; Romans 1:10
- (6) On Psalm 38, 13-14
- (7) Sermon 34; cf. Luke 1:46-56; I Peter 1:1-17; 2:22-24; Romans 11:33-36;
16:25-26; I Timothy 6:15-16; Revelation 1:6-7; 5:9-12; 11:17-18

FLORILEGIUM 3

- (1) Treatise on Fasting 3, 3
- (2) Op. cit., 2; cf. Cicero, De Senectute 18.66.1
- (3) Op. cit., 4
- (4) Sermon 209, 2
- (5) Treatise on Fasting 5, 2
- (6) Op. cit., 2
- (7) Letter 130, 16
- (8) Sermon 50, 4, 6; cf. Letter 157, 4, 39

FLORILEGIUM 4

- (1) Sermon 47, 12-14
- (2) Treatise on the Gospel of John, 25, 2; cf. On Holy Virginity, 34, 34
- (3) Sermon 82, 4, 7
- (4) On the Lord's Sermon on the Mount; cf. Matthew 7:5; Song of Songs 4:1
- (5) Sermon 83, 7, 8
- (6) Letter 95, 3
- (7) Letter 153, 1, 3
- (8) Sermon on I John, 7, 11
- (9) Confessions 10, 5, 40

FLORILEGIUM 5

- (1) Treatise on the Gospel of John, 17, 7-9
- (2) On the Manual Labour of Monks 25, 32; cf. Corinthians 6:10
- (3) Letter 130, 31

FLORILEGIUM 6

- (1) Sermon on Psalm 54, 7; cf. Matthew 10:28
- (2) Sermon 56, 9, 13
- (3) Sermon 211, 3, 3: cf. Matthew 18:35
- (4) Sermon on Psalm 95, 15
- (5) Sermon 96, 2, 2
- (6) Confessions 4, 9

FLORILEGIUM 7

- (1) Sermon 340, 2
- (2) Confessions 10, 36, 59
- (3) Sermon 46, 6
- (4) Sermon on Psalm 66, 10
- (5) The City of God, 21, 27, 2

FLORILEGIUM 8

- (1) On I John 9, 9; cf. Isaiah 53:2-3; Sirach 44:6
- (2) On Continence 3, 8
- (3) The Way of Life of the Catholic Church 1, 33, 70
- (4) Sermon 298, 5, 5
- (5) On Rebuke and Grace 9, 24; cf. Matthew 6:12-13
- (6) Confessions 10, 43
- (7) Op. cit., 68-70

WORKS CONSULTED

The Liturgy of the Hours, Volumes I - IV. ICEL Translation. (New York: Catholic Book Publishing Company, 1975)

Saint Augustine, Treatise on Various Subjects. (New York; Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1952)

Saint Augustine, Letters, Volume V. (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1956) pp. Xiii-xiv, 41

Pierre Mandonnet, O.P., St. Dominic and his Work. Translated by Sr. Mary Benedicta Larken, O.P. (St. Louis, Missouri, B. Herder Book Co., 1944)

Note: Mandonnet has brought to light the genesis and authenticity of a more primitive Augustinian Rule, the Disciplina Monasterii (about 388). A Commentary was added to the Disciplina by St. Augustine himself, and the two together formed one Rule. The Disciplina was suppressed in the 12th century; only the Commentary remained. Letter 211 is a Transcription of the Commentary. For further study, please see pp. 211-253.

Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. (New York: Mentor Omega, 1962) pp. 185 ff.

ON LOVE OF GOD AND LOVE OF NEIGHBOR

Sr. Mary of Christ, Los Angeles

"Our chief concern...is the love of God, and after this to love our neighbor, for these are the two greatest commandments...The first aim of community life is the ideal of unity in community - all our thoughts and desires united and centred on God."¹

This paper is intended to explore some of the meaning in this beginning of the Rule of St. Augustine. Unity in community flows naturally out of the commandments of love of God and neighbor and is theologically derived from it.

Love forms the innermost dynamism of the human character. The integrity of a personality centers on the object of love. Self love spirals the personality inward on itself. "For in common with everybody else, every man loves what he thinks he is."²

Love forms a bond of identification. Clinging to created goods warps the personality: in the end it would mean that persons would find their meaning in things.

"The divine essence itself is charity even as it is wisdom and goodness. Now we are said to be good with the goodness which is God. So, too, the charity by which we love our neighbour is a sharing in the divine charity."³

It is the love of God which is to form in us this "spontaneous movement of the lover toward the beloved"⁴ and by it we cling to God, Himself.

Original sin is a lived reality. Woundedness makes it difficult to pursue the true good. Yet "...it is impossible that these two should be simultaneously true, namely that the Holy Spirit wills to move a person to make an act of love, and that such a person should lose charity by committing sin..."⁵

"Listen Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength" and "...You must love your neighbor as yourself."⁶(Mark 12:30).

We have chosen to pursue this love in the life of a monastic community. Monastic orders have tried to relive the life of the Jerusalem community who were "united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common." (Acts 4:32). The Acts of the Apostles is commonly considered the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. Scripture commentators repeatedly underline this theme in the Acts. For example, G.W.H. Lampe, in PEAKE'S COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, writes: "...The presence of the Spirit is expressed in two ways: externally in the mission to Israel, internally in the unity of the brotherhood itself, where perfect harmony is given practical expression in the sharing of property."⁷

Monastic life as such is an expression of the presence of the Spirit of God. It is a witness to the Church and to the world, a witness of the unending mutual self-giving of the Holy Trinity. It mirrors the oblation of Christ who loved us and sacrificed Himself for us (cf. Gal.2:20).

"Because we share in the mission of the apostles, we also follow their way of life as St. Dominic conceived it."⁸ The fullness of perfect charity in the lives of the nuns is to bear fruit in the salvation of souls.

The charity of God is poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit dwelling within us (Rom.5:10). Accordingly, St. Thomas regards charity as an effect of the Holy Spirit, a virtue which enables us to share in the very charity of God.

"According to Aristotle not all love has the character of friendship, but that only which goes with well wishing, namely when we love another as to will what is good for him"⁹

Since God shares His happiness with us it is possible to have a relationship of friendship with Him: friendship is based on this mutual sharing. This love unites us to God and He is its principal object. It is in Him that we love our neighbour. God's gift of love in us flows both into love of God and love of neighbor.

"Now the light in which we must love our neighbour is God, for what we ought to love in him is that he be in God. Hence it is clear that it is specifically the same act which loves God and loves neighbour."¹⁰

St. John writes that "This commandment we have from God that he who loves God should love his brother also." (1John 4:21). Once our affections are set in order the charity infused by the Holy Spirit will unite us not only to God, but to our neighbor as well: God's gift makes it possible easily and pleasantly to fulfill His law.

St. Thomas lists the five characteristics of charity given by Aristotle:

"First, every friend wishes his friend to be and to live; secondly, he desires good things for him: thirdly, he does good to him; fourthly, he takes pleasure in his company; fifthly, he is of one mind with him, rejoicing and grieving over almost the same things."¹¹

If charity is to will what is good for the other, how then must one will good for God, who is goodness Himself? Perhaps in this way: the greatest good for God is to be Himself, to do what He does, to will what He wills. One can do this by every act which assents to this goodness of God, by obeying His laws -since they stem from what He is-, by acts of virtue, of faith and of hope, by any other such thing which by its nature gives consent to the goodness of God and the order in which God has established all that is. To will this is to will what is good for God.

We do not thereby add anything to Him, it is true. But now ordinary acts, things that might seem simply a matter of obligation, beliefs that seem true but not vibrant, all of these things now become bonds intimately uniting us to the love of God. There is no happiness outside of the order in which God established things, ultimately, because there is no true happiness outside of God Himself.

From this it follows, that acts of love are intensified not necessarily by emotional fervor but by letting oneself be ever more completely enveloped in the embrace of God. What we are to love in our neighbors is that they be in God, that they be on the way to salvation. This is to desire good things for the neighbour. By the common life, by good example, by our sharing in the richness of the same God in the bond of a religious family, we do good to them. This will make us people who, having but one mind and one heart, find pleasure in each other's company. Loving God and after Him our neighbor will itself create this unity. "Wherever there is love, social bonds are strengthened, and wherever it is not found, they disintegrate..."¹²

Life in community involves practical choices based on the nature of the person and the nature of life shared with God.

Our Holy Father discusses some aspects of the psychology of women in some spiritual exercises given to students in Poland which are compiled in THE WAY TO CHRIST. It will be no surprise to anyone who has followed his catechesis that he draws upon the Scriptures for his descriptions.

"The first thing which strikes us is that when they approached Christ, these women acquired a certain interior autonomy..."¹³ Since "women are more intuitive and feeling than men, and become involved in things in a more sensitive and complete manner...they need a support (for example, in the Gospel we find them 'by Christ's side'), a great maturity and interior independence."¹⁴

It is necessary to make choices which enable others to live more fully this intimate relationship with Christ, - and since we are women our specifically feminine nature itself fosters such a relationship. One must respect the interior independence of others and offer mutual support allowing each to know deeply the love of all their sisters. "That human experience of love can help us fashion that 'sharp dart of longing love' which will pierce the cloud and allow the warmth of God's love to come through to us."¹⁵ C.S. Lewis, in THE GREAT DIVORCE, would have us expect great differences between one holy person and another:

"We are not living in a world where all roads are radii of a circle and where all, if followed long enough, will therefore draw gradually nearer and finally meet in the centre...Good, as it ripens, becomes continually more different not only from evil but from other good."¹⁶

But how does one grow in this life of holiness? Human perfection is very desirable, but it is not an adequate basis for sanctity. Father Von Balthasar remarks that:

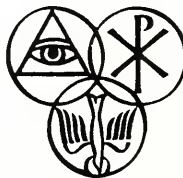
"They (the real saints) grow in stature, not round their own centre but round God, whose incomprehensible grace gives greater personal freedom to the creature who frees himself to exist solely for God: a paradox that can only be solved as one begins to realize that God, in his self-surrender, is love, as jealous as he is unenvying, as exclusively desirous to gather us to himself as he is to distribute himself universally."¹⁷

There are always some who do not seem to respond to love, and so especially as contemplatives, we are unable to take direct and effective action in the case of many. But "when we abandon our neighbor to God he continues to be supported by our love and the pain of being unable to help him accomplishes more than any self-confident action."¹⁸ From this Father Von Balthasar concludes that the contemplative life is that which is spiritually most effective.

And so we have come full circle. Charity comes from God and leads to Him, -and it is charity that creates unity in diversity. All necessary human goods are supplied; even weaknesses can eventually be healed by God. Human love leads others to divine Love and also mirrors that Love. Not only is contemplation of God the 'better part'; it is fully satisfying when it is embraced with one's entire being.

NOTES

- 1 RULE OF ST. AUGUSTINE, II: A Modern Rendering, Sebastian Bullough, O.P., IX.
- 2 SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, St. Thomas Aquinas, Blackfriars and Mc Graw-Hill Book Company, Vol.34, trans. R.J. Batten, O.P., 2a2ae,25,7,reply,p.101.
- 3 SUMMA,2a2ae,23,2,reply obj.1,pp.13,15.
- 4 SUMMA,2a2ae,25,2,reply,pp.85,87.
- 5 SUMMA,2a2ae,24,2,reply,p.71.
- 6 THE JERUSALEM BIBLE: Reader's Edition, General Editor Alexander Jones, Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, NY. All Scripture quotations are from this edition.
- 7 Ed. Black & Rouley, Nelson, Hong Kong, 1962, p.892.
- 8 CONSTITUTIONS OF THE NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS, Basic Constitutions, SIV, p.5.
- 9 SUMMA,2a2ae.23,1,reply,p.7.
- 10 SUMMA,2a,2ae.25,1,reply,p.83.
- 11 SUMMA,2a,2ae.25,7,reply,p.103.
- 12 THE WAY TO CHRIST: Spiritual Exercises, Karol Wojtyla,trans.L.Wearne, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1984, p.98.
- 13 Ibid., p.33.
- 14 Ibid., p.35.
- 15 TO BE A PILGRIM: A Spiritual Notebook, Cardinal Basil Hume,O.S.B, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1984, p.52.
- 16 THE GREAT DIVORCE, C.S. Lewis, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1971, 11th printing, pp.5-6.
- 17 LOVE ALONE, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Herder & Herder, N.Y., 1963, p.98.
- 18 Ibid., p.194.



AUGUSTINIAN THEMES IN OUR BASIC CONSTITUTION

Sr. Mary of the Precious Blood, O.P.
Buffalo, New York

In the monastic tradition we have inherited through St. Augustine, expression is given to certain insights considered basic to the fullest realization of Christian perfection. The primary source in which we find these insights is, of course, the Rule Augustine authored. However, these same insights are offered in many other works by the saint, even in works which antecede the Rule. Two of Augustine's central points — the recognition of Christ, living and present in the monastic community, and the attainment of the vision of God through purity of heart — are developed in the Basic Constitution of the Nuns. In these first paragraphs of our Constitutions, our sisters are directed in their search for God to proceed through and in the Word, submitting in faith and purity of soul to this truth, for the ultimate attainment through grace, of union with God in Christ.

Locating our vocation within St. Dominic's original inspiration in ISI, our Constitutions encourage us in the following lines to embrace God and our neighbor in one single charity, regarding ourselves first and foremost as true members of Christ. In two of St. Augustine's works, The Happy Life, and his Commentary on Psalm 41, emphasis is placed on the theme of Christ presiding as our Head, and we, the faithful, constituting His members. In the first work mentioned, Augustine resolves a discussion on wisdom by concluding:

This is the happy life : to recognize piously and completely the One through Whom you are led to the truth, the nature of the truth you enjoy, and the bond that connects you with the supreme measure.¹

Of special importance in this quotation is the first line : to recognize piously and completely the One through Whom you are led to the truth. We are reminded of the exhortation to honor God in each other, God, Whose temples we are, establishing the ecclesial and monastic communities as the visible expression of our mystical incorporation with Christ through His incarnation.

Augustine's vision of our incorporation with the Word opens out to eternity, nourishing within us the aspiration to seek more earnestly the "glory of the Lord revealed in His Face" (2 Cor 3:18). In an excerpt from the saint's Commentary on Psalm 41, the mystical union which Christ's members form with each other is presented as a paradigm, a model of the ideal unity in which is revealed an inchoate perception of the life we hope to attain in heaven.

"I have poured out my soul above myself," and there remains nothing more to lay hold of other than my God. Indeed, it is there, it is above my soul that the house of God is. There He dwells, thence He arouses me, thence He calls me, thence He directs me, thence He guides me For He

who possesses, beyond the highest heavens, an invisible mansion, has also a tent on the earth. His tent is His Church. . . . It is here we must seek Him, because in the tent we shall find the way that leads to the house (of God). I will enter into the place of the tabernacle, the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God. . . . The tabernacle of God on earth is made up of His faithful. ²

While we must regard ourselves first and foremost as members of Christ, we are urged to reflect on the means by which we are to submit to the Word in Whose life we participate. The search for God in purity or singleness of heart, leads us to submit to the Word we recognize in our midst, doing so through the discipline of community life and the celebration of the liturgy. Only when we are freed from the concerns which darken the soul's sensitivity to His presence can we be open to the Spirit of God animating our spirit. Using the gospel text from Matthew 5:8, St. Augustine treats of the necessity of detachment from all save God as an essential prerequisite for the divine vision.

"No man hath seen God at any time." God is an invisible reality. He is to be sought, not with the eye, but with the heart. If we would see the light of the sun, we must keep clear the bodily eye which is our means of beholding. So if we would see God, let us cleanse the eye with which God may be seen. And the place of that eye we may learn from the gospel "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God". ³

Echoing this thought, we read in our Basic Constitution ISIII and IV that in "purity and humility of heart, they (the nuns) love Christ, Who is in the bosom of the Father." Our sisters are exhorted to be "converted to the Lord, withdrawing from the solicitude and orientations of the world." With single hearted devotion, the nuns are to "pray together daily, (offering) to God a sacrifice of praise, especially in the celebration of the liturgy." The whole of our lives is to be focused upon Christ, for we are called upon by God's Word to become what that Word proclaims, by the grace which this Word provides. All the individuals of the monastic community are united through the celebration of the liturgy, concentrating the dynamism of their spirits on the praise of our Redeemer. We are sealed in the covenant between God and mankind preeminently by our share in Christ's sacrifice, the Eucharist, the focal point of Jesus' redemptive action.

The themes expressed by Augustine and presented to us in our Basic Constitutions, offer a pattern of interior development, intended to render our souls porous to God's grace. Christ, present in the monastic community, is made visible to our spirits through detachment. We return by these means to the grace of His Image within us. Striving to respond to our vocation, and made confident in our response by the example and help of our Blessed Mother and St. Dominic, we can understand St. Augustine's description of the happy life

and apply it to ourselves :

A certain admonition, flowing from the very fountain of truth, urges us to remember God, to seek Him and thirst after Him tirelessly. This hidden sun pours into our innermost eyes that beaming light. This light appears to be nothing other than God. ⁴

Notes

1. St. Augustine, De Beata Vita, Ludwig Schopp, (trans.), Cima Publishing Co., (New York, 1948), p 83.
2. Louis Bouyer, The Spirituality of the New Testament and of the Fathers, Desclee and Co., Inc. (New York, 1963), p 479, 480.
3. Epistle of John to the Parthians, VII, of Augustine: Later Works, ed. J. Burnaby, (Philadelphia 1955), p 317.
4. Op. cit., p 83.

* * * * *

Intimate Encounter

Moses asked:

"May I see Your Face
if indeed
I have won Your grace?"

"No, my friend,
you would die in awe
Die of love,
if My Face you saw..

Stand you will
in a rocky crack,
When I pass
you may see My back."

Yahweh passed
in His glory grand;
Spoke His Name,
then removed His hand.

COMPARATIVE STUDY ON REGULAR OBSERVANCE - OLD AND NEW CONSTITUTIONS

Sister Mary of the Annunciation, O.P.
Lufkin

It was recently suggested that our community might offer another comparative study of the 1930 and 1971 Constitutions similar to that which was done for another issue of DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH. This suggestion, together with our own recent workshop conducted by Father O'Donnell on Cassian and Dominican Spirituality, was the impetus for the writing of this paper. 1)

My point of comparison is the basic and dynamically profound shift of emphasis from regular observance (1930), to common life supported by observance (1971), as the primary means to holiness. To state that the shift is from "regular observance" to "common life supported by regular observance" may seem like playing with words, but the new emphasis (1971) has made a tremendous difference in interpretation and in practical application to our daily life.

In the 1930 Constitutions the focus was almost exclusively on faithfulness to the WRITTEN WITNESS. Our union with God and our relationship with one another in the context of community was not dealt with; whereas this is the main thrust in the 1971 Constitutions, which focus upon the personal obligation each of us has to seek God in and through the WITNESS OF LOVE AND RECONCILIATION that Christian community requires.

Although both Constitutions stress *observance* as a means to interiorization, yet the stress in the 1930 Constitutions upon perfect observance as the norm could, and sometimes did, obscure the fact that observance is a means and not an end. Perfect observance could then be equated with holiness of life. The manner of expression and points of emphasis of the 1931 Constitutions reflect the thinking of a particular time in the history of the Church and a certain cultural orientation which is, it seems to me, not the same in our present culture.

By steeping ourselves in our Dominican spirit and monastic tradition we should have a clear sense of where we have been and where we are going. The 1971 Constitutions go back to the more primitive ideal of monasticism and at the same time clearly place us within our own Dominican spirituality. We are rediscovering the essence of our call and working to shape the future with courage, while hopefully, not fearing to express the essential elements of our life in new ways that will foster a more profound interiorization. The 1971 Constitutions, precisely by this shift of emphasis, call us to deeper interiorization and personal responsibility for the quality of our life together. *Our search for God takes place in the school of community living.* This truth has many practical applications of which we are becoming increasingly aware and already seeking to assimilate more completely. The present Constitutions encourage us to respond actively to the challenge of living in a more responsible manner our Dominican monastic life.

Internalization means that we allow our life in community to touch the inner depth of our being in order to heal and transform us into the Christ-

mystery. We are not undertaking the "search for God" in isolation. Our search for God is irrevocably linked to the community in which we live. Within the context of fidelity to common life we put on Christ and are molded into his likeness by the Spirit of the Lord. The growth and deepening of our life with God is bound up with the people with whom we live and is not just a set of observances to be perfectly kept.

In the following excerpts from the 1930 and 1971 Constitutions I have chosen those pertaining in some way to the theme of regular observance (1930) and common life safeguarded by regular observance (1971). Although we do not yet have the official text of the new Constitutions this comparison will still remain valid because there have not been any really radical changes in the new text.

UNITY

The 1971 Constitutions speak of the "unanimity of our life", a unity which finds its source in our love for God. We are rooted in God's love and therefore called to be a community of reconciliation by our example, the very kind of community that our brothers and sisters preach by their proclamation of the Word. Here we have one of the many instances of interiorization that the 1971 Constitutions presents. Our unanimity is not the result of uniformity of observance but rather a living relationship with God. To be "rooted in God" is a powerful phrase. Our rootedness in God brings about reconciliation with our sisters as a true witness to the God-life in which we participate. The 1971 Constitutions tell us our unity finds its source in the Trinity and this oneness in God is meant to go beyond the limits of the Monastery to a communion with the Order and the whole church. Regular observance remains important in the 1971 Constitutions, but it is seen as the *means* by which we are faithful to our vocation and not the *main source* of our unity as stated in the 1930 Constitutions. The placement of regular observance in the 1971 Constitutions confirms this observation. The 1930 Constitutions begin with regular observance; the 1971 Constitutions speak of it in a separate chapter and place it later in the text.

1930 Constitutions

Since, by precept of the Rule the nuns are commanded to have one heart and one mind in the Lord, it is right that since they live under the same rule and under the same profession of vows, they should be uniform in the observance of the same Constitutions: for uniformity observed outwardly in our manners fosters and brings to mind that unity which ought to be preserved inwardly in our hearts.

-Prologue #1, p.21

...if the manner of life be made plain to all through the written witness; if no one is allowed to alter, add or take away anything by her own counsel; lest

1971 Constitutions

...The first reason for which we are gathered together is that we may dwell together in unity and have one mind and one heart in God. Reaching beyond the limits of the monastery, this unity achieves its fullness in communion with the Order and the whole Church of Christ.

Pg.6,Sect.I,Chapt.1,Art.I, SI

The unanimity of our life, rooted in the love of God, should give an example to all of that reconciliation in Christ which our brethren also proclaim by word.

Pg.6,Sect.I,Chapt 1,Art.I,SII

1930 Constitutions

by neglecting small things, they fall away little by little.

-#2, pg.21

To provide, then for the unity and peace of the Nuns of our Order, by command of the Apostolic See we set before them this book, which we call The Constitutions of the Nuns of the Sacred Order of Preachers; and to its prescriptions we command that all religious, whether subjects or superiors conform their manner of life.

#3, p. 22

1971 Constitutions

As in the Church of the Apostles, so among us, communion is founded, built up and stabilized in the same Spirit in whom we receive the Word of God the Father in one faith, contemplate Him with one heart, and praise Him with one mouth; in Whom we are made one body, sharing one bread; in Whom, finally, we hold all things in common.

pg.6, Sect.I.Chapt I, Art.1,#3,SI

In order to remain steadfast in their vocation the nuns should have the highest regard for regular observance, loving it in their heart and faithfully endeavoring to carry it out.

pg.10,Sec.I,Chap.1,#40,SIII

The 1930 Constitutions fix the source of our unity first of all in "this book, which we call the Constitutions" and to which, "all...whether subjects or superiors conform their manner of life." According to these Constitutions unity and peace come from the faithful observance of the book of Constitutions. In the past, deportment often became too much of a preoccupation. A conformity that is too rigidly maintained could produce the illusion of unity where in fact it does not exist. One of the greatest illusions the Fathers of the Desert waged war upon was the monk's tendency to appear good rather than really to be good.

The common life to which the 1971 Constitutions point is really the commitment to live the Christian life. Our monastic life expresses the particular way in which we have been called to dedicate ourselves totally to live the Christian life. The 1971 Constitutions situate us first within our monastic family; then the affiliation between our life in community and the larger body of Christians is stated, and this is reiterated frequently in the texts that follow. The 1930 Constitutions do not contain this aspect, but rather stress the need of faithfulness to the vows, to times of community prayer and contemplation, without any mention of the effect our personal commitment to holiness has upon our monastic community or the Church and the world.

The first Article of the 1930 Constitutions and the first Article of Chapter 1 in the 1971 Constitutions cite the precept of the Rule of St. Augustine. When we turn to the Rule of St. Augustine we find the concept of community life put before us in a way similar to the thought of the 1971 Constitutions. The Rule begins with charity and states that our source of unity comes from "being one mind and one heart in the Lord." The first sentence of the Rule, which is so familiar to us, says "before all else..we must love God and after him our neighbor; for these are the principle commands which have been given to us." Basically we have here our Christian vocation. The 1971 Constitutions, like the Rule, put our life into the context of the communion we are meant to achieve through our unity with one another and with the Order and the Church. The 1930 Constitutions do not relate our unity to charity, but rather to our conformity through observance. With regard to the wider community outside the

Monastery the 1930 Constitutions speak only in terms of caution, warning against the dangers of involvement. In the following constitutional texts one can easily see the radical shift in emphasis:

1930 Constitutions

...the means given to the Nuns by the Holy Patriarch Saint Dominic for the attainment of this end, and transmitted to us by venerable tradition, are especially: the three solemn vows of poverty, chastity and obedience; the solemn recitation of the Divine Office; certain fasts and bodily mortifications; and the devout and constant contemplation of Our Lord, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

pg 23, Chapt 1, #6

Although the Nuns are not bound to have perfect charity, yet as religious they are bound to strive after and use the means to acquire perfect charity: observing those things determined and prescribed for them according to the Rule and Constitutions of which they have made profession.

pg.69 Chapt XI,Art.IV #147

All useless intercourse with secular persons is full of dangers and is therefore to be avoided by the Nuns, as becomes virgins consecrated to God.

pg.88,Chapt XIV,Art.I,#186

Let both the prioress and her subjects earnestly strive that their intercourse with externs in no way offend against regular observance, religious silence and the general peace of mind. All should therefore endeavor to keep their Monastery as far as possible removed from the world, each one seeking to keep a guard over her soul as over a garden enclosed for the Divine Spouse.

pg.88,Chapt XIV,Art.I,#187

1971 Constitutions

Of one mind through obedience, associated in the love of higher things by the discipline of chastity, depending more closely on one another through poverty, the sisters first build in their own monastery the Church of God, which by the offering of themselves, they help to spread throughout the world.

Sect.I,Chapt 1,Art.I,#3,SII

In order that each monastery may be a fraternal community, all accept and regard each other as members of the same body, differing in natural dispositions and gifts but equals in the bond of charity and by profession.

Sect.I,Chapt.1,Art.1,#4,SI

In the various dealings of the monastery with neighbors, guests and those who come to them, that charity which unites the nuns leading their hidden life should shine out to all men. The Prioress especially should be mindful of this duty of charity, and those sisters whose task it is to communicate frequently with externs. But the whole community, living together with one heart in God, should be as it were a center from which that charity radiates upon all.

Sect.I.Chapt.1,Art.1,#14

The community established in the monastery is a school of charity whose teacher is Christ the Lord with all the sisters cooperating, each according to her status and duty.

Sect.II Chapt.I,#118,SIII

The 1930 Constitutions repeatedly stress conformity to observance; the 1971 Constitutions just as insistently direct observance towards its end and purpose as a framework in which to live true Christian community. Thereby they firmly establish observance as a MEANS, not as a goal. The goal of any

Christian life is always charity. The Constitutions give structure to our vocation to become Christian through the medium of our Dominican monastic life, and then, conversely, show how our particularization of the Christian ethos is related to our brothers and sisters in the total community of humankind. In other words, our holiness lies in being a Christian community, living the message of the Gospel. We simply accomplish this within the Dominican framework.

The 1971 Constitutions do not lose sight of the importance of observance as the means through which we are helped to remain steadfast in our vocation. Observance is very necessary. Observance is the framework in which we surrender our poor "scoop of humanity to be worked upon by the grace of the Lord," as Father Tugwell has so well expressed it. 2) The community has the first responsibility for formation (Sect.II,Chapt.1,#118,SIII). Community is each one of us, striving together. In the commitment, generosity, fervor and harmony of our lives together the young will "become stable and grow in their vocation." (Sect.II,Chapt I,#121,SIII). In the 1971 Constitutions all monastic discipline and each of the vows are treated from this point of view.

OBEDIENCE

The first Article on obedience in the 1971 Constitutions reminds us that Dominic required a willing obedience of the brethren, but was himself obedient to the Chapter as it formulated laws for the Order. Our thought is therefore directed not just to the person of the superior (as in the 1930 Constitutions) but to the more complete understanding of our common obedience to Dominican life. This Article on Dominic's obedience inserts our expression of obedience firmly into the Dominican tradition, which then colors our approach to obedience in very unique ways. It safeguards Dominican obedience and puts the role of the superior into the rightful context of community and Dominican life. The superior has a special responsibility for safeguarding the common good and fostering the discipline and goals of Dominican monastic life. That is why she has been elected. But each one of us also has responsibilities for furthering these goals and the common good of all.

The 1971 Constitutions state that the principle of our unity comes through obedience. The unity concomitant with obedience is not just a matter of the command of the prioress and the conformity of the sister, but also entails an exercise of personal responsibility. This dimension of the personal responsibility of each member to seek the common good and to place herself at its disposal expands our understanding of obedience. A new dimension in the 1971 Constitutions (not included in the 1930 text) is the superior's obligation to listen to the sisters. Personal responsibility on the part of the sisters does not change legitimate obedience to authority, nor the authority's right to command. The superior, on her part, has an obligation to exercise her role of leadership when the situation makes this necessary. In important matters her final decision cannot be an arbitrary one but must be one based upon all the facts and information at her disposal, which includes the insights of the sisters. For this reason the obligation to listen to the sisters is a serious one.

An attitude of overdependency upon the prioress can obscure personal responsibility in a way that is not healthy for the community or for the individual. Human maturity can be effectively stifled by such dependency. Maturity in decision making includes the ability to bear the responsibility for our decisions. In immature obedience we seek to be sheltered from the consequences of our decisions and this in turn fosters further immaturity. Obedience of this type can easily become manipulative and can isolate us from a responsible participation in the real life of the community. The 1971 Constitutions show clearly that true obedience arises from our common search (both the superior and the community) for understanding of and commitment to our Dominican monastic life.

1930 Constitutions

Religious obedience is primarily and directly concerned with those things which are laid down explicitly in the Rule and in these Constitutions or in the ordinations of Chapters. But secondarily and indirectly with those things which though not contained explicitly in the law, are however found to be necessary or highly useful for insuring the observance of the laws; of this nature are: the ordinary duties with0 out which the religious state could not be maintained, the penalties due for transgression of the Rule, and the ordinations of superiors that make for the preservation of religious life.

pg.75, Chapt XII, Art. III, #171

1971 Constitutions

When the Order began St. Dominic asked the brethren to promise him fellowship and obedience. He himself submitted to the decisions, especially the laws, which the general chapter of the brethren decreed after full deliberation. But in governing the order outside the general chapter he benignly but firmly required a willing obedience from all, in those things which, after due deliberation, he himself prescribed. In order to continue faithfully in its spirit and mission, a community needs a principle of unity which it obtains through obedience.

Sect. I, Chapt. I, Art. 2, #22, SI

Therefore in our profession we promise obedience to the Master of the Order according to our laws, and thus unity of the Order and of profession is preserved, since it derives from the unity of the head whom all are bound to obey.

Sec. I, Chapt. I, Art. 2, #22, SII

The common good which obedience promotes also requires that the prioress gladly listen to the sisters, especially by appropriate consultation with them in matters of greater import, without prejudice however to her authority to make the final decision. In this way the whole community as a single body is more suitably directed toward the common goal of charity.

Sec. I, Chapt. I, Art. 2, #25, SI

THE CHAPTER OF THE MONASTERY

Dominican obedience is built upon mutual trust and it involves dialogue. In the 1971 Constitutions the Monastery Chapter ("the body of nuns having active voice") is seen in a new light as the place of dialogue and it now takes on a much greater role than in the past. In the 1930 Constitutions the more important decisions were left to the Prioress and her Council (which consisted of several ex-officio members and other members appointed by the Prioress). The duties of the Chapter were the election of the Prioress, the admission of novices to the habit and profession, the admission of a nun from another Monastery, certain business transactions involving legacies, loans, the alienation of property or precious articles, and also, interestingly, the erection or suppression of a school for the education of young girls. The sisters were also allowed to vote on the confirmation of the ordinary confessor.

The 1971 Constitutions give the Chapter of the monastery a more active role in the life of the community. Most importantly, they expand the work of the Chapter to include the election of the councillors. The Chapter has the duty, through consultative or deliberative vote, to express its views on matters previously decided either by the prioress alone, or the prioress and her council. Another important work of the Chapter is the compilation of the Directory and the sending of petitions to the Master of the Order. The Directory (new in the 1971 Constitutions) allows each monastery Chapter to formulate the particular form of their common life. These changes have repercussions on the way obedience is viewed.

1930 Constitutions

In each monastery there shall be Council Mothers without whose consent the Prioress may not treat of the more important matters.

Chapt.V, Art.I, #499

The Chapter shall be convoked by the Prioress whenever necessary, and notice must be given of it a day in advance so that the vocals, knowing what is to be discussed, may, before God, consider the matter so as to vote righteously..

Chapt VI, #521

In the Chapter, having invoked the Holy Spirit and the matter having been proposed by the president, it is permitted to each to express her opinion, but the matter shall be decided by a secret vote, and this under pain of nullity.

Chapt VI, #524

In the 1971 Constitutions obedience has a relationship not only to the superior, but also to the Chapter.

1971 Constitutions

The chapter of the monastery is the body of nuns having active voice in the monastery, which under the presidency of the prioress has the power to examine and decide on matters of greater importance according to the norm of the law.

Sec.II,Chap.1,Art.2,#220

REGULAR CHAPTER

The article on Regular Chapter in the 1971 Constitutions speaks of it as being a vehicle of mutual assistance for the members, an aid to renewal, and a means for developing the regular life; whereas the 1930 Constitutions call it, "the Chapter of Faults" and deal with it accordingly. Chapter, in the 1930 edition, was seen primarily as a gathering of the community to pray for benefactors, acknowledge blessings received, and to learn religious humility by the confession of faults. The concept of mutual assistance toward renewal and development contained in the 1971 Constitutions suggests a new orientation, an effort involving active community participation which is not included in the 1930 Constitutions. Renewal took place there through the individual being renewed at Chapter, and this in turn making the whole community more fervent. In the 1971 Constitutions renewal is seen as a concerted community effort. Comparing the phrasing of the two documents, it seems to me that the change of emphasis in the 1971 Constitutions could bring about a far more dynamic change in the life of the whole community.

In both documents the matter for Chapter consists in light faults committed against the Rule and Constitutions. The 1930 Constitutions make the obligation to acknowledge faults more serious than the 1971 Constitutions do. In the former, by not acknowledging faults, even light ones, the sisters dispose themselves to sin. Willfully omitting the chapter penance is declared sinful. (1930, #347). The 1971 Constitutions omit any obligation to acknowledge faults and do not mention at all the matter of sin in regard to the failure to perform the chapter penances. Also, the format for conducting the Chapter is left open in the 1971 Constitutions.

1930 Constitutions

By the Chapter of Faults is meant the calling together of the community by the Prioress, to tell of benefits received, to pray for benefactors, and as an exercise of religious humility, for the confession of daily faults or failings against the Rule and Constitutions. This school of virtue was held in great esteem by St. Dominic. pg.131, Chapt XXIII, #341

If Chapter is not held every day, it should be called at least once a week, and after the manner laid down in the Ceremonial of the Order. But if it is held daily, it may be omitted on days when a general Absolution is given.

pg.132, Chapt. XXIII, #344

1971 Constitutions

At the regular chapter the nuns, in charity and humility, fraternally gather under the leadership of the prioress for mutual assistance in the renewal and development of the regular life.

Sect. I, Chapt. 1, Art. 5, #74

The time for holding the regular chapter is to be determined in the directories. It should be held at least once a month.

Sect. I, Chapt. 1, Art. 5, #75

The regular life of the community is to be considered in the chapter either by self-accusation of failures or in some other way conformable to the usage of each monastery. The one presiding may appropriately give a talk on the spiritual or religious life and make corrections. Also prayers for the benefactors are to be offered.

Sect. I., Chapt. 1, Art. 5, #76

In the accusation made in the regular chapter the sisters are to accuse themselves only of those failures or defects contrary to the Rule and laws of the Order which do not involve loss of one's good name.

Sect.I,Chapt.1,Art.5,#77

The 1971 Constitutions state that the regular life of the community should be considered in the Chapter, especially in the light of renewal and development, and this is something well worth pondering. The 1971 Constitutions leave open the format for Chapter by stating that the Chapter can be conducted in the traditional way of "self-accusation of failures" or "in some other way conformable to the usage of each Monastery." Could we not also consider the article on fraternal correction in this edition in connection with the examination of the regular life within the Chapter?

"Zealous for each other with the zeal of God, the sisters should not be afraid to help each other by discreet admonitions."

Sect.I,Chapt.I,#5

By this I do not mean going back to proclamations, something very alien to our present mentality, but rather taking the underlying meaning of this text and applying it to the consideration of the regular life of the community in chapter. Regular Chapter could be a time when we discuss together our vision and goals as a community with an eye to calling one another to a fuller realization of these goals and ideals. By reminding ourselves of these goals, we are enriched by the insights, strivings and struggles of our sisters as expressed by them within a community context. A greater clarity is attained. We have placed before us guidelines by which to see the truth of ourselves and the truth toward which we are to continue to strive. Without pointing a finger at any one person, each one of us can come to know ourselves better in the light of the goals we discuss. We are able to challenge and to encourage one another to persevere in our search for God and for a deeper love for one another. This ongoing challenge of seeing ourselves and setting clear goals prevents us from hiding behind our observance without ever really surrendering the deepest part of our humanity to the Lord.

We can call one another to recognize the graced moments of conversion, moments when the Spirit calls the community to deeper faithfulness and to new vitality. Such an attitude prepares us to follow the Spirit of the Lord as he guides the community to holiness. By heightening our consciousness of the guises in which these challenges present themselves, and at the same time recognizing certain moments of change and decision as INVITATIONS from the Spirit to conversion, both on a communal and an individual level, we are enabled to respond with greater alacrity and faithfulness. These moments of decision keep a community alive and vital.

The 1971 Constitutions, then, have opened the way to more dialogue within the Chapter. Our community chapter meetings are the time to discuss and say honestly what we think. Trust is presupposed when we dare to take the risk of sharing our thoughts and our dreams with one another. Do we take seriously enough the obligation we have to become a part of the dialogue of Chapter?

This is an obligation for all of us, not just for a few. If those who easily express their views need to exercise self-restraint on occasion, it is equally true that the quieter members of the community need to exert themselves at times and to take the risk of sharing their thoughts. 'Those who find it difficult to speak before a group might, as an alternative, write out their thoughts to be read at Chapter. All of us need to develop the art of listening and reflecting upon what each sister shares, thus avoiding the danger of merely reacting to one another. The ability to listen critically to the thoughts and ideas expressed by our sisters, combined with a seeking of the truth together, could be wonderful sources of growth and development. According to the dictionary, critical listening consists in "the ability to exercise careful judgment and judicious evaluation". In our close community situation I think we need to strive continually to be good critical listeners, judging not by the personality of the one sharing but by the content of the thoughts shared within community discussions. Mutual respect for each other and appreciation of our varying insights are always two important goals towards which to strive. The Chapter as a forum for mutual assistance could indeed be a very practical and energizing force for improving the quality of our communal life, as well as an exciting area of challenge where much constructive work can be done.

WORK

This seems the logical place to consider the Article on work. In addition to the conventional interpretation of work found in monastic tradition, and included in both the 1930 and 1971 Constitutions, a new factor appears in the latest text, which is the accountability of each member in promoting the common good. The 1930 Constitutions regard work mainly as an antidote to idleness and specify that the prioress or another nun be present as a sort of supervisor while the nuns are working, but the 1971 Constitutions speak of work by using such terms as "awareness of responsibility", "willing acceptance of tasks and offices", and "generously lending a helping hand where it is needed." Work serves the common good because it is a witness of a Christian community in which each cooperates for the good of all.

The 1930 Constitutions had specified that the sisters should "devote themselves...to manual work for the common utility", and in that way stated that work must be done for the good of all, with the superior placed in the role of overseer of the work. The 1971 Constitutions, on the other hand, place superior and sisters together as collaborators seeking, with humility and sound judgement, the common good. The article on work in the 1971 Constitutions clearly directs the sisters towards collaboration in tasks performed. This section on work must be viewed in connection with the one on obedience (Art.II,#25,SI,p.8) Obedience promotes the common good, the cooperation between superior and sisters, and helps us to direct all our activity "as a single body...towards the common goal of charity." (Ibid.)

1930 Constitutions

Since idleness is an enemy of the soul, and the mother and nurse of vices, let no one in the cloister remain idle, but let each be always occupied, if she can in some good work; for she is not easi-

1971 Constitutions

Aware of their responsibility towards the common good, the Sisters should willingly accept tasks and offices in the monastery, and gladly lend a helping hand to others.

1930 Constitutions

ly ensnared by temptation who is intent on some worthy employment.

Part I, Chapt. XX, #297, p.120

Except at the hours and times in which they must be engaged in prayer, the office or other necessary employment, all, with the exception of those officials who may have been dispensed because of the duties of their charge, should attentively devote themselves as indicated in the monastery Horarium to manual works for the common utility, and this even in the novitiate.

Ibid. #298

The Prioress, or Sub-Prioress, or another Nun appointed for the purpose by the Prioress, should be present with the Nuns while they work.

Ibid. #299

CHASTITY

The Article on chastity in the 1971 Constitutions begins with the reason for the vow. We promise to be celibate for the sake of the kingdom. Celibacy expands our capacity to love and to receive the love of our brothers and sisters. The Constitutions place before us the example of Dominic whose whole life "was consumed with love and zeal for souls." (Art.III,#28)

The 1930 Constitutions stress the safeguards to chastity, pointing out those things which should be avoided. Although these Constitutions put before us the spiritual aids to chastity: humility, fervent prayer, the sacraments, and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, Mary, St. Dominic and all the saints, these means are not integrated into life in community, and common life is not presented explicitly as an important means of growth in our celibate commitment.

The 1971 Constitutions, on the other hand, enumerate similar aids to strengthen celibacy, but do not isolate them from our life as it is lived with our sisters. The various spiritual helps are linked together in a more positive way, and directed towards union with God and one another. For example, chastity is to be seen "as an exceptional gift of grace by which we are more intimately consecrated and the more easily united with an undivided heart to the God who first loved us." (Art.II, #29,SI). Or again, "we gradually attain to a more effective purification of heart, freedom of spirit and fervor of charity." (Art II,#29,SII). Also, "our sisters...should in all the circumstances of life maintain intimate communion with God by means of a loving union with Christ." (Art.III,#31,SI) Therefore the 1971 Constitutions differ from the 1930 Constitutions in that they explain the role asceticism, prayer and devotion play in nourishing our goals of communion with God in Christ, and with one another. The 1930 Constitutions concentrate on the

1971 Constitutions

especially to those whom they see to be overburdened.

Sect.I, Chapt.1, #4, SII, p.7

Work is demanded by religious poverty and serves the common good by begetting love in cooperation.

Sect.I, Chapt.IV, #111, SII, p.15

The superiors and the sisters should with humility and sound judgment willingly cooperate in the common work.

Ibid. #115

religious means which help us to give ourselves exclusively to God.

1930 Constitutions

By the vow of Chastity the religious bind themselves to observe evangelical celibacy, and they bind themselves besides with a new obligation, namely that of the vow itself, to abstain from every action, interior or exterior, contrary to chastity.

Chapt. XII, #165, p.74

To preserve the angelic virtue, let the Nuns make use of appropriate means, the chief are: to avoid unnecessary intercourse with those outside the Monastery to observe modesty in word and action; to restrain the senses; to take the discipline often, after the example of our HOLY Father St. Dominic; to cultivate humility; to pray fervently and to receive the Sacraments frequently to be devoted heart and soul to the

Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Dominic and all the other saints of our Order.

Ibid. #168, p. 75

Let them avoid, too, every familiarity even with our Brethren or with one another, fly the occasions of temptation, watch over their thoughts, curb the flesh, and ever occupy themselves in good and useful work.

Ibid. #169, p. 75

1971 Constitutions

Likewise, more and more under the insistent love of Christ, namely the all embracing divine friendship, they should become all things to all men; and in the common life of the religious family to which they are more strongly bound by chastity, they should cultivate fraternal and serene friendships.

Sect. 1, Chapt. I, #31, SII

A radically new aspect in the 1971 Constitutions is mention of the positive value of friendship as an excellent help towards fostering chastity. Both our friendship with God and with one another are highlighted as the way and the goal of our perfection, "more and more under the insistent love of Christ, namely the all embracing divine friendship, they should become all things to all men...in the common life of the religious family...they should cultivate fraternal and serene friendships." (See above) The section on chastity situates celibacy in the traditional context of a free and universal love for all our brothers and sisters and then declares that we owe a special friendship and love to those with whom chastity binds us more strongly, namely, our religious community.

Sharing and sisterly exchange on the whole are viewed with a certain amount of distrust in the 1930 Constitutions. The present Constitutions, on

the contrary encourage a "unanimous sharing" in order that "the contemplative life and sisterly union may bear more abundant fruit." (Sect. I, Chapt. I, #7,p.7)

1930 Constitutions

Let the Prioress however be cautious against readily giving leave to speak without a reasonable cause.

Chapt. XV, #204, p. 93

Excluding the places and times aforesaid, the prioress can give the Nuns permission to speak: nay more a recreation is allowed to all the Nuns after dinner and, where it is customary, after supper...This recreation is to be held at the appointed place, and no one must absent herself from it without special permission of the Prioress.

Ibid. #203, p.93

1971 Constitutions

In Order that the contemplative life and sisterly union may bear more abundant fruit, a unanimous sharing should be of the greatest importance to all the sisters, "for a good that is commonly approved, is swiftly and easily promoted.

Sect. I, Chapt. I, #7, p. 7

Mutual knowledge and sisterly union are fostered by various recreations and exchanges either of a general or special character, at determined times...the example of Father Dominic, of whom it was said that "no one was more of a community man...

Ibid. #6, p. 7

In keeping with the spirit of our present constitutions, the opportunities for sharing and conversation may be something we need to look at more closely and honestly in order to work out new possibilities of sharing with one another within the framework of the monastic silence and solitude.

POVERTY

The 1971 Constitutions give us a rich theology of poverty (Sect.I, Chapt I Art.IV, #32 and #33). Poverty is described as a freedom from servitude to possessions in order that we may "more fully devote ourselves to God." Through the deprivations of the vow of poverty we are reminded of the actual poverty of our brothers and sisters throughout the world which we are meant to share and be identified with. The 1930 Constitutions, on the other hand, have a more juridical approach to poverty. The 1971 Constitutions complete the picture of poverty by affirming our commitment, not only as a duty of the whole community, but also as something "to which we are committed as individuals." (Sect.I, Art IV, #34, Sl, p.9)

1930 Constitutions

All the Nuns, without exception, are forbidden to have temporal goods, except alone for their use and with the permission of the superior.

Chapt.XII, Art.I, #150,p.71

Common life, which is urged and commanded by the Sacred Canons, by the Rule, and by our Constitutions, and

1971 Constitutions

With a vibrant confidence in the Lord, this spirit of poverty impels us to make our riches consist in the justice of God's kingdom. It is a freedom from servitude and from the care of worldly affairs so that we may more fully devote ourselves to God and have more time for Him. Consequently, it

1930 Constitutions

has been so often insisted on by General Chapters, should be observed with care by the Nuns, and the Prioress must permit no deviation from it.

Chapt XII, Art.I, #160,p.73

1971 Constitutions

means for us a deprivation by which we more closely share with the poor who are to be evangelized; but it is also a generosity towards the brethren and our neighbors since for the kingdom of God we freely spend all that we have "so that in the needs of this life which pass away that charity may reign which abides forever.

Sect.I.Chapt.I ,Art.4

Therefore in our profession we promise God to have no personal possessions but to hold all things in common and to use them under the direction of the superiors for the common good of the monastery, the Order and the Church.

Sect.I,Chapt.1,Art 4

Nor in the community is the amassing of common goods, which do not contribute to its purpose, admissible since this is contrary to the poverty to which we are committed as individuals and as a community.

Sect.I,Chapt.1.Art.4, #34,SIII

CONCLUSION

I believe that the Holy Spirit is at the heart of the new direction in which our communities are now going. It is only with our cooperation and participation that the work of renewal will be completed. We need to prepare for the future and not simply to allow the future to happen. To be satisfied with certain things because "we have always done them that way", is not adequate for our present time in history, as we are realizing. We need the courage to question and to search, not in order to create doubts, but rather to increase the quality of our monastic life. This surely is a vital attitude which will foster growth and holiness. We should not be afraid to challenge one another with our questions and our searchings.

The Basic Constitution of the Order expresses this spirit very aptly:

"The essential purpose of the Order and the way of life inspired by it have their importance in every age of the Church's life. Nevertheless, as we learn from our history, in times of great change and evolution, it is urgent that we rightly understand this life and purpose.

"In this situation it is the genius of our Order to renew and adapt itself courageously. It must seek out and examine all that is good and useful in the aspirations of contemporary man and draw these things into the stable fabric of its own life..."

The Order, then, encourages us to adapt. That does not mean a mindless adaptation, but one by means of which we reflect upon our present situation in the light of tradition. In such an atmosphere we are encouraged first of all to seek to understand the true meaning of our vocation and then to adapt courageously, drawing these adaptations into the stable fabric of our life. May these few reflections generated by a comparative study of the 1930 and 1971 Constitutions add just a little to the common reflection that we have undertaken at this time.

NOTES

Quotations from the Constitutions are all taken from Constitutions of the Nuns of the Sacred Order of Preachers, 1930 edition, Polygot Vatican Press and Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers, 1971 edition, translated by the Promoterate of the Province of St. Joseph and approved on behalf of the Master of the Order.

- 1) Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P. Workshop on "Cassian and Dominican Spirituality" given at the Monastery at Lufkin, March 2-8, 1985.
Father O'Donnell in his workshop introduced and developed some extremely important thoughts on community in the Dominican tradition. He spoke of community in our Dominican life as the primary authority and nurturing ground, as well as the principal tool of spiritual formation: in the Dominican tradition the community carries out the function which is the proper role of abbot or abbess in early monastic tradition.. Our growth in holiness is bound up with our decision to surrender our life completely within the community. He challenged us to work towards a clear vision of our goals in order to take an active part in shaping our future, in clarifying our understanding of what Dominican monastic life is in essence. He felt that understanding of the early tradition was a great help towards this.
- 2) Simon Tugwell, O.P. Workshop on Dominican Spirituality given at the Monastery in Lufkin, August 31 - September 5, 1985
Father Tugwell presented an historical overview of different approaches to observance in the monastic tradition. He singled out a type of observance based on skepticism about the motivation of people in general. Observance itself tended to be sacramentalized so as to be the way of putting off the old man and becoming a new creation in Christ. He said that this was the ideal of Cluny and Citeaux and that while it is a legitimate option it risks becoming empty and mechanical without leading to real conversion. Then he cited the more primitive style as that of the desert Fathers who were concerned with the basic facts of human nature and how one could be saved, a 'scoop of humanity being worked on by the grace of God', as he put it. Father Tugwell thought that St. Dominic tended towards this more primitive style, that he did establish a fairly strict monastic framework but expected it to be a means of facing our real human reality and situation and handing it over to the work of God's grace; the framework was not to become a protective device.

STUDY IN THE DOMINICAN TRADITION

Part I - The Friars

Sister Mary of Jesus, O.P.
Bronx

The Dominican Order has a long tradition, indeed from its very inception, of a deep-seated need for, constant attention to, and a well-developed use of study as a means of fostering the spiritual growth of its members.

To twentieth century ears, this is doubtless a strange-sounding point to emphasize, but one must consider the background:

Dominic Guzman died in 1221; the Nuns had been founded in 1206; the friars in 1216.

Education in general was the prerogative of the wealthy merchant and upper classes.

Preaching was the official task of the bishops.

The Scriptures were not available in the vernacular.

Seminaries were the exception rather than the rule. Most priests learned their "trade" through an apprenticeship to an older man whom they would eventually succeed. A systematic schema of studies was not adopted until the Council of Trent.

Religious life was generally monastic, or of the military orders--engaged for the most part in manual labor or hospital work.

Dominic's vision was that his followers were to be preachers, hence a need for education, for a deep spirit of prayer and holiness of life, and an insatiable zeal for the salvation of souls.

It is interesting to note in Dominic's own life that nearly ten years were spent in STUDY in Palencia; another ten years were devoted to PRAYER and meditation as a canon in the Chapter of Osma, and ten more years were engaged in PREACHING among the Albigensians of the Midi. In the six remaining years, it could be said that he developed the framework of the Order from personal experience.

Without entering into a lengthy discussion as to the sources of the Constitutions and the lifestyle subsequently adopted, suffice it to say that the Chapter of 1216 chose as its Rule that of St. Augustine, augmenting it with the Customary (1216) and Institutions (1220), the former, the code of regulations formulated to run the local house and establish its observances--drawn largely from the Rule of Premontre; and the latter, an original body of laws defining government and apostolate.¹

St. Dominic has often been portrayed as a cold intellectual--precise and detailed; there is little of the delightful grace of a Francis about him. Abstractions and dry study can lead to a removal from reality, to a distorted view. It is perhaps for this reason that study for the Dominican is always subordinated to the purpose of the Order: the salvation of souls, and that charity is its prime justification. It is moved by charity for neighbor that one seeks to aid him; charity, for the Dominican, calls forth the sacrifice of religious observance and the discipline it entails to this end: the other's good.

That Dominic put people first can be seen from a story told of his student days--how he sold his annotated manuscripts to obtain money for the starving: "I will not study on dead skins when men are dying of hunger."²

Study was and is seen as a striving for God and those things that would lead others to him. Contemplation could develop out of the understanding grasped and both together would feed the efficacy of the apostolate.

In this sketch. I would like to consider several aspects of study, all of which are certainly interwoven: study as a means of fostering one's individual spiritual growth; dispensation as it was used to further study, and the need for study in preparation for the ministry of preaching.

Vicaire related a story of the early preachers reported by Alexander Stavensby, theology professor of the Chapter of Ste. Etienne in Toulouse, dated to about 1215:

The master was giving his course. He saw the preacher come in with six companions, all wearing the same habit. They assured him that they wanted to enroll in his school and greatly desired to attend his classes. They were not all equally in need of them. After this, for a long time to come, the master enjoyed their familiar friendship and instructed them as his pupils.³

Having excluded the trimmings, this story has actual historical foundation. One enjoys the view of the leader shepherding six little friars to school; but the story demonstrates graphically the attention paid by the Saint to theological studies, that source of preaching and wellspring of contemplation.

Related to this is the fact repeated by many witnesses at the canonization process that throughout St. Dominic's travels, he was never without the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistles of Paul, and that he derived great benefit also from the Conferences of Cassian.⁴

St. Augustine says, "In the study of created things, we must not exercise a mere idle and passing curiosity, but must make them a stepping-stone to things that are immortal and that abide forever." Clearly, study was to foster prayer and contemplation and lead to a closer union with God.

In the Chapter proceedings of 1216, St. Dominic was found giving a strong impetus to preaching, but always as the outgrowth of prayer and study. Contemplation was to overflow into activity. Among those observances especially sought was silence to provide and maintain an atmosphere conducive to prayer and study.

That study was one of the observances geared to forming the young religious may be seen in the results of the 1216 Chapter discussions dealing with the role of the novice master:

the novice master teaches his novices humility of heart... to behave...with what care they must handle the books... what application they should have in study...reading or meditating, striving to retain all they can...and what fervor they will have in preaching when the time comes...⁵

or as Tugwell corrects it "whenever is appropriate"--more consistent with the fact that novices in the early days (prior to the Chapter of 1236) could be and were called upon to preach.⁶

Despite a strong bent towards things monastic, the friars preachers were innovative to a large degree. Study and the ministry of souls replaced the manual labor of the earlier Orders. The list of faults was taken from the Premonstratensians, but added a number of new possibilities. The master commits a fault by neglect in teaching; the student by neglect in study, if he fall asleep during lectures or study, and others.

In 1220 there appeared a notation, "the superior has the right to dispense himself and the brethren from anything that might get in the way of study or preaching or the good of souls."⁷

Dispensation was granted not merely for reasons of health as in the older Rules, but that the salvation of souls might be better effected. Fasting, abstinence and attendance at the choral office (private recitation was still obligatory) could be dispensed "lest study be impeded."

Thomas Merton has an oversimplified but nevertheless succinct description of the obligation of study in The Sign of Jonas:

I admire St. Dominic above all for his love of Scripture and for his respect for the STUDY of Scripture. Scripture was the heart of his contemplation and of his preaching... In St. Dominic's first Friaries they were brief and quick about the Office... in order to get to their books, and the friars were encouraged to prolong their vigils in study. Study was not precisely the essence of the Dominican vocation, nevertheless each house was a house of study and the study was to lead to contemplation that would overflow in preaching.⁸

This brings us to the third area of importance: study for the preaching apostolate, and study in forming the preacher.

From a purely practical point of view, it is easily seen that study was required in order to preach, debate with heretics or demonstrate the truths of the faith.

To this end, the house in Paris, Ste. Jacques, became the studium generale for the Order in 1221, conferring as it did the universal license to teach theology. And subsequent foundations would be located in major university towns such as, for example, Oxford.

Jordan of Saxony, St. Dominic's immediate successor, coined the descriptive phrase of the preachers, "Honeste vivere, discere et docere" (to live honorably, to learn and to teach). Houses of study were set up in all the provinces, and despite the severity of the mendicant poverty, books took first priority in the use of tithes.⁹

Study acted as a formative guide for the developing preacher. This can be seen in the Prologue to the Primitive Constitutions:

Because a precept of our Rule commands us to have one heart and one mind in the Lord, it is fitting that we, who live under one rule and under the vow of one profession, be found uniform in the observance of canonical religious life, in order that the uniformity maintained in our external conduct may foster and indicate the unity which should be present interiorly in our hearts...

It is known that our Order was founded, from the beginning, especially for preaching and the salvation of souls. Our study ought to tend principally, ardently, and with the highest endeavor to the end that we might be useful to the souls of our neighbors.¹⁰

Once again it can be seen that study and contemplation are the true sources for apostolic preaching. This entails the sharing of the fruits of one's intellectual and spiritual endeavors.

Summary

St. Dominic was innovative in several ways. Founding an Order dedicated to preaching, he did away with the manual labor of earlier Orders and replaced it with the ministry of souls, based on a background of study and contemplation. He utilized dispensations not only for reasons of health, but also for the good of the apostolate, that the individual might profitably spend time in study even at the cost of other religious observances. Study was seen as an important part of the life-style developed and fostered throughout the novitiate, and nurtured throughout one's life since knowledge aided prayer, and prayer with knowledge vivified the preaching.

In an address to the Dominican Educational Association in 1972, Father Fabian Parmisano pointed out:

Dominican study was not to be a sterile affair, a matter only of the mind...Ex amore Dei proxima was the qualification attached to Dominican study...grounded in prayer and showing prayer's depth and reverence. And...Like Dominican prayer, it was to be ordained to an end beyond itself. Truth for its own sake, yes, but always with the further view to reaching the minds and hearts of man with it.¹¹

Part II - The Nuns

The first branch of the Order of St. Dominic to come into existence was that of the Nuns, the Sister Preacheresses of the Monastery of Prouille in Toulouse who were organized in 1206, ten years earlier than the friars.

In this section of the paper, I would like to consider the Dominican tradition of study as it was understood and observed by the Nuns of the Order. To do this it is necessary to trace briefly the history of the Nuns' Constitutions and the legislation or lack of it regarding study. This has presented many problems, due mostly to a lack of materials easily available.

The Constitutions of Prouille (1206) do not exist except in the Primitive Constitutions of San Sisto, where Dominic adopted the earlier model. This was accomplished as he consolidated several groups of Roman nuns, under the instruction and governance of sisters sent from Prouille. By 1232, there was added a separate supplement, entitled the Statutes, based on the more developed legislation of the friars: clearly an early attempt (between 1228-32) on the part of the Nuns to bring the Second Order into greater conformity with the Brethren.¹³

A period of rapid expansion in the number of monasteries followed the death of St. Dominic (1221); he himself had founded houses at Prouille, Rome and Madrid, and a fourth was planned for Bologna. By 1250, thirty-two houses existed in the German province alone. Numerous other communities sought to affiliate with the Dominicans: Father Hinnebusch mentions Cistercians, Augustinians and Sister Hospitaliers to name a few. Others were placed under the Order by papal decree.

With affiliations, adoptions and new foundations, there came to be a wide range of legal codes in effect, enough that Humbert of Romans, the fifth Master General, lamented the "variety of constitutions" in use. He obtained permission from Rome to unify the laws. In 1259, he promulgated new constitutions, obligatory to the point of the Nuns' retaining their Dominican identity. According to Hinnebusch, these remained with virtually no great revision until the 'new' Constitutions of 1930 under Master General M.S. Gillet.¹⁴

We can see from the San Sisto Constitutions that study did not play any role in the legislation of the Nuns as it had for the friars: there is only one mention of study made:

...with the exception of the hours which the Sisters ought to consecrate to prayer, to reading, to the preparation of the Office and chant, or to study (l'etude des lettres), they should devote themselves to some manual labor as shall be judged good by the Prioress.¹⁵

It would seem that study was at least allowed for.

With Humbert's codification, even this scanty reference disappeared, and was presumably missing in the seventeenth century revision by Mahuet. In Potton's revision (1st edition, 1864; 2nd, 1878), this section allows for "prayer, the Office or any other necessary occupation," but makes no mention of study. This must be emphasized because Humbert's original intent was to bring the Nuns' Constitutions into conformity with that of the friars. Nothing is legislated about study in 1930 although a long prefatory letter accompanies the Constitutions wherein Master Gillet, in response to a directive from the Sacred Congregation of Religious,¹⁶ gives the reasons for the Nuns to study Christian Doctrine and the Truths of the faith.

As a point of fact, nothing seems to have existed in the legislation dealing with study for the Nuns until 1971 when the section "Keeping and Hearing the word of God" was added with its directives toward the Nuns' role in the ministry of the Word; the need for spiritual reading and study, tending to "real dialogue with God."¹⁷

Exclusive of legislation, what was the actual experience of the Nuns regarding study? Once again, resource material is difficult to locate.

It would seem that the Nuns never lost the desire for close ties with their brethren: they were co-operators in the ministry of souls. One has only to recall the tales of St. Dominic giving conferences at San Sisto, and the very extensive exchange of letters between Jordan of Saxony and Diana D'Andalo and the Nuns of St. Agnes in Bologna,¹⁸ to catch a glimpse of the mutual ties. Certainly the Latin posed no problem for them. They shared in the preaching through their prayers, interest and support.

Even if the monasteries were to be no more than houses of accommodation for the friars¹⁹ (as Tugwell seems to suggest), the Nuns' vocation was such that they had to share intellectually in at least some of the friars' endeavors.

The influence of Eckhart, Suso and Tauler is evident. Many of the Nuns were involved in the mystical movement of the 14th Century in Germany: the Monastery of Toss particularly comes to mind, and the Ebner sisters, Margaret and Christine. A literary style developed: the Nuns wrote of their own or their sister's visions and mystical experiences.²⁰

Large libraries suggest at least an interest in reading and study. St. Gall in the 15th Century had about 325 volumes, 187 of these in Latin. Pre-Reformation Dartford in England listed a wide variety of titles including collections by Richard Rolle,²¹ St. John Fisher, a life of St. Kateryn of Sene and the Legenda Aurea. Both Latin and the vernacular seem well represented.

It was quite natural for many houses of nuns to have a scriptorium for reproducing books. The illumination, binding and calligraphy are in themselves a technical art, but the knowledge needed to write and copy certainly required skill in reading and comprehending Latin and the vernacular which would in turn require a certain amount of study.

Many earlier monasteries had taken children for education, but the Dominican Nuns never considered this a primary aim. Several places, including Dartford, did this on a routine basis, but these houses would seem the exception rather than the rule. (Education and teaching became primary with the Third Order Sisters, not the Second Order Nuns.) For their own education, the English Preacheresses demanded and received masters in Latin and Grammar (Literature) from among the friars in 1481.

The solution in Germany to the problem of providing intellectual and spiritual education for the nuns led Provincial Herman (1286-90) to give them fratres docti: lectors or masters in theology for confessors and preachers on holidays, Sundays and vigils (when the schools were closed); these expounded at the grille what was taught in the lecture halls.²²

Summary

The history seems to imply that the daughters of St. Dominic sought to emulate their brothers in their intellectual pursuits--all-beit to a different end.

Study never played the same role for the nuns as for the friars. Although sharing deeply in the ministry of preaching through prayer and penance and in supporting the friars, the nuns--product of a more monastic tradition--retained the manual labor dropped by the friars in favor of preaching and study.

Nevertheless, study plays a vital, formative role for the aspiring candidate and indeed provides both intellectual and spiritual stimulation; knowledge for the Nun, no less than the Friar, enhances the life of contemplation.

In a day when more and more candidates enter at a mature age, when education is widely available and sought after, it seems important to remember the role study can play in fostering the developing vocation and in strengthening and nourishing deeper prayer and dialogue with God. It must be seen that our Dominican heritage is rich in bringing forth the Truth, in contemplation, and in all the modes and practices of achieving these, including study.

These examples are drawn largely from the very early days of the Order. This is not because none exist today--one has only to consider the beginnings of the Dominican Study Week sponsored by the Conference--but as a challenge to the Nuns to discern for themselves the ways study is applicable in this day of rapid communication and expanding knowledge, and to realize the ever present value of study in deepening prayer-life and as a means of sharing and supporting our brothers, St. Dominic's other offspring.

The Nuns, no less than the brethren, share the Dominican heritage:

St. Dominic may be taken as the living symbol of the aspirations of human nature: an intense intellectual curiosity, exalted and made glorious by faith; a yearning for repose, for a kind of sabbath calm felt by the human heart; and the need for outlet, for expansion and action. These are the three spiritual dimensions: the life of the mind in study, the absorption in God by prayer and contemplation; and the outflow of the soul into apostolic action. These three are not mutually exclusive or contradictory: they are the height and depth and breadth of the soul's life. Hence we know what characteristics to look for in St. Dominic's Order. His true children will bear the family likeness. They will be contemplatives, teachers and apostles.²³

Footnotes

- ¹Marie-Hubert Vicaire, OP, St. Dominic and His Times. McGraw-Hill Book Company, NY, 1964, pp. 208, ff.
- ²St. Dominic: Biographical Documents, Francis C. Lehner, ed. The Thomist Press, Washington, DC, 1964, p. 123.
- ³Vicaire, p. 178.
- ⁴Documents, p. 118. Dom Jean LeClerq suggests the extensive use of Cassian to be due to the lack of books available on spirituality, except for the Conferences. (Private discussion with Dom LeClerq, LaCrosse, 1980)
- ⁵Vicaire, p.209.
- ⁶Simon Tugwell, OP, The Way of the Preacher. Templegate Pub., Springfield, Ill., 1979, p. 83.
- ⁷Ibid., p.17.
- ⁸Thomas Merton, The Sign of Jonas. Image Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, NY, P. 209. For another reference to Study as Vigil, see "Sermon on St. Dominic," by Thomas Agni of Lentini, Early Dominicans: Selected Writings, Simon Tugwell, OP, ed. Paulist Press, Ramsay, NJ, 1982, pp. 61-65, especially p. 61.
- ⁹Vicaire, p. 178.
- ¹⁰Documents, p. 212 (Prologue to Primitive Constitutions).
- ¹¹Rev. Fabian Parmisano, OP, "Dominican Relevance," DEA Address, 4/5/72, Philadelphia. Printed by Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, Summit, NJ.
- ¹²Early Documents of the Dominican Sisters, Vol. I "Primitive Constitutions of San Sisto," Translated from the French & printed at Our Lady of the Rosary Monastery, Summit, NJ, 1969, pp. 5-22.
- ¹³William Hinnebusch, OP, The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500. Alba House, Staten Island, 1965, p. 380.
- ¹⁴Ibid., pp. 384, 406. From 1259 to 1930, there was no major revision. There were some modifications in the 17th Century by Fr. Mahuet, OP, and some others in 1864 by M.A.Potton, OP. The second edition of this 1864 work (in 1878) eliminated all the ceremonies, a Ceremonial having been published in 1872. I made use of this latter text in translation, Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Dominic, with Notes and Commentaries of Marie-Ambrose Potton, OP. Translated 1892, Church News Publishing Co., Washington, DC. The revision by Humbert of Romans appears in Early Documents of the Dominican Sisters, Vol. II, pp. 5-39. Our Lady of the Rosary Monastery, Summit, NJ, 1969.
- ¹⁵"San Sisto" #34, p. 20.
- ¹⁶Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, 11/25/29; Preface Constitutions of the Nuns of the Sacred Order of Preachers, Polyglot Vatican Press, 1930, pp. xviii-xx.
- ¹⁷Book of the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers, 1971, Translated, edited and prepared by St. Joseph's Province Promotorate, #102, S I.
- ¹⁸To Heaven With Diana: Letters of Jordan of Saxony to Diana D'Andalo and the Nuns of St. Agnes, Bologna. Gerald Vann, OP, ed., Pantheon Books, NY, 1960.
- ¹⁹Tugwell, p. 85.
- ²⁰William Hinnebusch, The History of the Dominican Order: Intellectual and Cultural Life to 1500. Alba Hous, Staten Island, 1973, pp.304.ff.

- ²¹Dartford Priory: the History of the English Preacheresses, by Dominican
Nuns of Headington. Blackfriars Publication, Oxford, 1945, pp. 23
and following.
- ²²Ibid., p. 17.
- ²³Humbert Clerissac. The Spirit of St. Dominic. London: Burns & Oates,
1939.

* * * * *

AUTUMN SCENE

Speak, colored leaves
In your beauty mute yet loud.
'Tis autumn now and Yhwh
With His majestic brush
Has splashed your dainty frames
With tints of yellow orange and red.

Speak, little stream.
From where did you come and how long has it been
For you to reach this place?
In concert you trickle
And laugh as you dance
In step to charm this glorious scene

You drown my hearing with your message
Of end, fulfilment and closing.
Yes, 'tis autumn now and soon Yhwh
Will pluck your plush ripeness
And cover you with cold bleak whiteness.
You glow carries me not unwillingly
And hushes me with peace.

Sister Mary Regina, O.P.
(West Springfield, Mass.)

THE ROLE OF SOLITUDE IN DOMINICAN CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

Sister Mary Bernard, O.P.
Summit

"An elder said: Go back to your cell, sit down and stay there, saying your prayers. When you're hungry, eat; if you're thirsty, drink; if you feel drowsy, well, go to sleep. But stay in solitude. Stay patiently in your cell and it will teach you everything." 1

This and many like sayings from the desert tradition may almost sound simplistic to modern ears; but with their characteristic bluntness, they can still alert us to the surpassing value of monastic solitude. In fact, this element of our life might easily be overlooked, in the light of the renewed emphasis on Christian community and the psychological dimensions of group dynamics and interpersonal communication. Yet, even clinical psychology testifies to the exceptional value of solitude. Provided it is desired in a healthy way, the experience of solitude often leads to a new and more profound integration of the personality.

The stress on Christian community is very good, for Christ Himself tells us, "This is how all will know you for my disciples: your love for one another" (Jn 13:35). However, within the broad context of the Christian life, the Dominican Nun has a special vocation to mirror Christ withdrawn in prayer. "Through them, Christ should be shown contemplating on the mountain" 2 (Lumen Gentium 46). Without ever denying the intrinsic communality of Christian life, the Church documents clearly point to solitude as one of the most essential and defining characteristics of contemplative institutes. Solitude and withdrawal from the world, for the sake of prayer, distinguish it from other forms of consecrated religious life. Thus, we find the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council summoning us to a highly specific mode of Christian life: "Members of those communities which are totally dedicated to contemplation give themselves to God alone in solitude and silence and through constant prayer and ready penance. Such communities will always have a distinguished part to play in the Mystical Body of Christ, whose members do not all have the same function" 3 (Perfectae Caritatis, #7).

This fundamental exhortation was expanded a few years later by the Sacred Congregation in Venite Seorsum. The instruction is replete with references to solitude, beginning with the most familiar introductory paragraph: "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place" (Mk 6:31). Numerous are those who have heard this call and have followed Christ, withdrawing to worship the Father there." 4

What part, then, does solitude play in Dominican contemplative life? Surely, we are not hermits like the Carthusians, nor do we have the eremitical spirit of the Carmelites. Venite Seorsum allows for a great diversity among the various institutes which arises from the practical emphasis laid upon mental prayer, liturgy, common life and solitude.

I believe that the Dominican brand of contemplative life flows naturely from a twofold source: the Rule of St. Augustine and the example of St. Dominic himself. Dominic's choice of the Rule of St. Augustine is significant, for Augustine gave to the world a new interpretation of "monachos" from which we derive monk and monastery. Originally, monachos meant alone or solitary. The monk or nun was one who

lived alone with God. In the new usage of Augustine, monachos is now derived from monos, "one", which signifies unity among many. Hence, those who dwell in the monastery should be intimately united to each other. "The main purpose for your having come together is to live harmoniously in your house, intent upon God in oneness of mind and heart " (Rule, Ch. 1). This emphasis upon fraternal charity in the "one body" is profound and gives to Dominican monasticism its familial and communal flavor. In any case, solitude was the original inspiration of monasticism going back at least as far as St. Anthony's successive flights into the desert. But for us, the spirit of solitude is tempered by the spirit of the Rule. It has constantly to be carried out within the setting of a very deep community life. The nun can never become severed from the community, even in attitude, without by that very fact, becoming something other than Dominican.

Our Father, St. Dominic, is an excellent embodiment of this principle of solitude in community. Humbert of Romans says of him: "No one was more a community man, no one more joyous," and this spirit must have pervaded his entire life. Yet, in Jordan's Libellus, we can also discover accounts of his love for solitude. "In childhood: he did not associate himself with those who 'walk frivolously'; like quiet Jacob, he avoided the wanderings of Esau, preferring to remain in the lap of his mother, the Church, and the homely tents of sanctity and repose." 5 Later on in life, "as a canon at Osma, he haunted the church by day and by night, devoting himself ceaselessly to prayer. Claiming for himself the leisure for contemplation, he hardly ever showed himself outside the confines of the monastery." 6 Finally, even during his extensive preaching journeys, Dominic would often go apart from his companions in order to commune with God alone. All of this taken together, seems to indicate the facility with which our Father was able to balance the two poles of solitude and community, moving back and forth between them with ease.

Thus, solitude and community need not be viewed as antithetical elements but rather as means to be balanced and integrated, in order that they may lead us to the true goal of perfect love. "By the wonderful favor of God's loving care, in this solitude of ours, we have the peace of solitude, and yet we do not lack the consolation and comfort of holy companionship. It is possible for each of us to sit alone and be silent, and yet it can not be said of us: 'Woe to him who is alone, if he should fall, there is none to pick him up.' We are surrounded by companions, yet we are not in a crowd " (Guerric of Igny).

Let us consider now the nature of solitude in itself. Firstly, it does not seem to be the sole property of contemplatives. Gabriel Marcel claims that solitude is man's vocation. "People are as incommunicable as they are impenetrable. Thus, solitude is inherent in man because of his being human." 7

But why should the nun seek a greater solitude, even beyond this fundamental, existential solitude common to all humankind? The great doctor of the church, Teresa of Avila, gives us a very succinct answer. "To accustom ourselves to solitude is a great help to prayer, and since prayer is the mortar which keeps our house together and we come here to practice it, we must learn to like what promotes it." 8 Solitude is never

the necessary cause of grace which always depends upon God's initiative, but it does seem to provide optimum conditions for the kind of prayer which transforms. It is so necessary, then, for one to know how to seclude oneself in order to let oneself be touched by God, in order to open oneself to His word, to His requests, to His sanctifying and healing grace.

Solitude can be alternately desert or paradise, but usually it is a place of severe struggle before it is a place of encounter with God. William Johnston, S.J. describes very clearly this condition of struggle. "For when one enters the desert without books and magazines, when one's senses are no longer bombarded by all the stimuli to which we are ordinarily exposed, when the top layers of the psyche are swept clean and bare and empty, then the deeper layers of the psyche rise to the surface, the inner demons lift up their faces." 9 In solitude, it is the heart of man that inevitably comes to the surface with its innate discord and compulsions. The fantastic stories of demonic appearances that we find in the accounts of the early ascetics are, for the most part, externally projected images of what they uncover within: sin and human frailty. This is the reason why the Desert Fathers consistently say that even if every other ascetic discipline were abandoned, persistence in the cell would alone suffice to bring one to spiritual maturity. The piercing experience of the depth of sin and weakness within oneself is very painful indeed, and one that we would rather avoid at all cost. Yet it is only in allowing our own personal darkness to come into God's light, into the radiant beams of His infinite love, that we will slowly experience a deep inner healing and uprooting of sin. External practices are powerless to reach this level of purification which only God, encountered in solitude, can bring about. "If the cell is a tomb, it is also a womb, a space within which the new creature in Christ can come to full maturity (William of St. Thierry).

In the famous "Life of Anthony", we can discern a progressive pattern of development corresponding to Anthony's flights ever farther into the desert, until at last he returned to become the spiritual father of numerous disciples. There are degrees of solitude. From the existential solitude consequent upon human life itself, we move on to a solitude freely chosen. "I will stand at my guardpost, and keep watch to see what He will say to me " (Habakkuk 2:1). We go apart and in the quieting of our soul, hear the still voice of another sphere. Yet even our choosing to go apart is in reality a free response to God's prevenient action, for He says: "Lo, I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart " (Osee 2:16). Gradually, we move even farther into the desert, a desert not of our own choosing, but experienced passively. This desert is created by God's incomprehensible presence within. St. John of the Cross wrote much about this kind of desert, but briefly; it seems that a very intense sense of isolation can spring from the experience of a spiritual light that is as yet beyond our capacity to receive. All the spiritual faculties of the soul are irresistably drawn inward without, however, knowing what it is that is attracting them, and are thereby unable to "pay attention" to anything without. The soul can neither bear God within, who is inaccessible light, nor find comfort or companionship outside itself. It is in a spiritual desert and, as it were, crucified between heaven and earth. All that can be done is simply to wait upon the Lord until the passive purification has run its full course.

"Let him sit alone and in silence, when it is laid upon him. Let him put his mouth to the dust; there may yet be hope " (Lam. 3:28-29).

At last, the desert will bear fruit, and in the wilderness water will flow from the rock. In proportion to the vastness of the solitude and isolation experienced, so will be the joy of communion with God and all creation. Solitude is here transformed into a profound solidarity with all that is. "For those who enter into the absolute relationship with God, nothing 'particular' retains any importance; neither things, nor beings, neither earth nor heaven, but everything is included in the relationship. Everything is seen in God. To have nothing besides God but to grasp everything in Him, that is the perfect relationship." 10

One is amazed to find that those who have entered most deeply into solitude have also entered most intensely into solidarity with all humankind. The Russian hermit (Poustinik) of old had no latch on his door manifesting that he was not there for himself but for others. Our Western tradition has the marvelous example of Dame Julian of Norwich. The English anchoress affectionately refers to her "fellow Christians" many times in her writings. "If I pay special attention to myself, I am nothing at all; but in general I am in the unity of love with all my fellow Christians. For it is in this unity of love that the life consists of all men who will be saved." 11 This quality of "relationship" is the hinge that links together solitude and community; for when alone we are not inclined to introspection but rather drawn out of ourselves toward God in loving self-transcendence. In community, this very same self-transcendent relationship with God must bear fruit in self-giving, loving service to others. Thus love is neither self-seeking in solitude nor in community, but burrows out a great space in our hearts for God and all the world to enter. There is a tremendous difference on this point between Christianity and Buddhism (and the many meditation techniques flowing from it). Buddhism and its derivatives can lead to the unification of the soul in its center (an intermediate goal), but it can never lead the unified being further into that supremely personal encounter with the supremely personal God. All mystical doctrines outside of Christianity seem to be based on this gigantic delusion--of the human spirit bent back upon itself, but the Christian contemplative, even in her seclusion is intimately present to God, to the Church and to the entire world. Her very being is a plea for the salvation of all humankind.

In our communities, we can imitate Christ who was not a hermit, but lived among men as we do. Jesus did withdraw for frequent periods of solitary communion with his Father and we too can do this without necessarily altering our community structures or even building hermitages! For the Constitutions state: "A nun should willingly return to the solitude of her cell when duties, work or obedience do not require her presence elsewhere " (LCM #58). Ingenuity will find many hidden places perfect for time alone with God, in the garden or elsewhere. And we always have, as St. Catherine tells us that "interior cell of the heart" from which we need never depart. "When your prayer has gained such stability that it keeps you always face to face with God in your heart, you will have seclusion without being a recluse. For what does it really mean to be a

recluse? It means that your mind, enclosed in the heart, stands before God in reverence and feels no desire to occupy itself with anything else " 12 (Theophan the Recluse).

In our communities there will also be a certain diversity with some members needing more solitude and others more togetherness. All the members, however, "live in community so as to protect one another's solitude both from deteriorating into loneliness and from being infringed upon by misguided togetherness." 13 We are the guardians of each other's solitude both to the right and to the left.

Finally, we are essentially a pilgrim people, so that no matter to what extent our communion with God and one another grows, it will never be complete in this life. There will always remain a strong sense of eschatological longing for the fullness that is not yet. "For here we have no lasting city; we are seeking one which is to come " (Heb. 13:14).

I would like to conclude with a short meditation of Father Karl Rahner. It is much like a lyric hymn from which we might take the theme for our own lives.

"The eternal future has come into our time. Its light still dazzles us, so much so that we think it is night. But it is a blessed night; a night which is already filled with warmth and light; full of beauty and mysterious and protective because of the eternal day which it carries in its dark womb. It is a holy night, if we let the holy silence of this night into our inwardness, if our hearts too keep lonely watch by night. We are lonely. There is an inner country in our hearts where we are alone, where no one but God can dwell. The question is only whether we do not avoid it in fear...because no one and no part of all that we trust in on earth can go there with us. We must enter softly and close the door behind us. There we must listen to the unique music played in the silence of the night where the quiet and solitary soul sings to the God of its heart. There it sings its softest and most inward music. It knows that God is listening as it sings. God is close to us, and the word of love, the softest word in the noiseless space of the human heart, reaches the ear and heart of God." 14

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES

1. Ward, Sr. Benedicta, SLG, "The Wisdom of the Desert Fathers" 1977 (Oxford, SLG Press), p. 22
2. Abbott, Walter M., S.J., "The Documents of Vatican II", (Guild Press, New York, 1966), p. 77
3. Op. cit., pg. 471
4. Sacred Congregation for Religious, "Instruction on the Contemplative Life and on the Enclosure of Nuns," (United States Catholic Conference, 1969), p. 1
5. Jordan of Saxony, "On the Beginnings of the Order of Preachers", (Parable, USA, 1982), p. 2
6. Op. cit., p. 3
7. Cf. Guardini, "Freedom and Grace", (Pantheon Books, New York)
8. Teresa of Avila, "The Way of Perfection", Translation by the Benedictines of Stanbrook, (London, Thomas Baker, 1919), p. 14
9. Johnston, William, S.J., "Christian Mysticism Today", (Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1984), p. 153
10. Buber, Martin, "I and Thou", (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1970), p. 127
11. Julian of Norwich. "Showings". Translated by Edmond Colledge. O.S.A. and James Walsh. S.J. in Classics of Western Spirituality. (Paulist Press, New York, 1978). p. 134
12. Ware, Timothy. "The Art of Prayer". (Faber and Faber Limited, London, 1966), p. 252
13. Steindle-Rast, David, O.S.B., "Contemplative Community", (Cistercian Publications) Consortium Press, Washington, D.C., 1972), p. 300
14. Rahner, Karl, S.J., "Meditations on Hope and Love", (Seabury Press, New York, 1977), p. 72

TRUTH

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Los Angeles

Veritas, the motto of the Dominican Order, carries with it a special and direct message for each member of the Order. That message, as directed to Dominican contemplative nuns is a very intimate yet demanding one. Was it not intimate and demanding for Christ, above all as the One who came to reveal to mankind the truth of the God-head even to the mystery of the inner life of the Trinity of Divine Persons? Only Jesus, as God-man and divine Son of the Father was able to do this. He 'was made flesh' and took on the ways of a human person so that he might teach humanity the ways of God. He expressed his humanity in a very concrete way by spending thirty out of thirty three years in a hidden life of labor, accomplishing the will of his Father. At the end of his life, when he was faced with apparent failure, he spoke eloquently of truth in his final discourse at the Last Supper. Let us look at the Gospel according to St. John to see what Jesus has to say of truth.

During his public life Jesus had told the Jews who believed in him: "If you make my word your home, you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free" (John 8:45-46). Elsewhere in this episode he had spoken of the devil as the father of lies, of whom he said: "He was a murderer from the beginning, he was never grounded in the truth" (John 8:44). The contrast is evident. To his own, his chosen ones at the Supper, and to us Christ says even to this day: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Jesus developed his thought further when he explicitly gave his reason for leaving his disciples: "Still I must tell you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going because unless I go, the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7). About the Advocate, his own Spirit, he said further: "When the Advocate comes, whom I shall send from the Father, the Spirit of truth who issues from the Father, he will be my witness" (John 15:26). The oneness and continuity of truth comes from the Father through Jesus as the revelation of God in man and is continued in the Spirit. Thus Jesus could speak of himself as the truth and the Spirit as the one who would continue to make the truth revealed in the mystery of the God-man known.

In his priestly prayer Jesus prayed for his disciples: "I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. Consecrate them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:15-17). His disciples must be protected from the falsity of evil which the devil promotes and the world often enshrines. But Jesus first of all consecrates himself, "so that they too may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:19). The note in the Jerusalem Bible on the verb 'consecrate' reads: "The verb means literally: 'to set aside for, dedicate to God', 'To sanctify (in the original sense of the word)'". Jesus, and his disciples after him, must be dedicated to the work of truth in some way. We, as Dominican cloistered contemplatives, each in her own hidden way, is sent out of self into the heart of Christ, the truth, and through him into the heart of the Church to serve truth in whatever way he wills. Only our holiness, the holiness of the truth, our total self giving will be productive in and through him. Mary will

always be our concrete example. Mary's faith was constant and grew gradually in depth from her first fertile 'fiat' to her momentous 'stabat' on Calvary.

"The Spirit teaches all truth" (John 16:13). Every truth, whether natural or supernatural, really comes from the First Truth, God himself in the Trinity of Persons. All that the Creator made was good, was part of truth. Scripture is the font of all truth and it will never be exhausted in expressing that truth. The Church will always be lifting out hidden truths that were always there. God has also put his truth within each of us, like a hidden treasury, and we must 'dig' to unearth it. We must study, meditate, pray and contemplate. We must apply our minds and hearts to the work of our sanctification in whatever way, position, work, capacity or incapacity we may find ourselves. There we must serve in love and obedience. There we will find the truth..

In Lumen Gentium we read: "The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful as in a temple. He prays in them and bears witness in them to their adoption as sons. He leads the Church into all truth and gives it unity in communion and service. He endows it with hierarchical and charismatic gifts, directs it by their means, and enriches it with his fruits." (1) Here we find the action of the Spirit of truth leading the Church into the whole of truth. And in the sixteenth document of the Council, Dignitatis Humanae, the personal responsibility to truth of each human person is expressed as the perfect exercise of freedom. "In accordance with their dignity as persons, that is, being endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear person responsibility, that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth once it is known and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth." (2)

Our own St. Thomas Aquinas gives us the essence of truth when he says: "Contemplation is a simple vision, a spiritual intuition of the divine truth." (3) And he goes on to explain: "If then, anyone studies merely to know and not that he may become better and increase in the love of God, he must realize that he is living the contemplative life not in the theological but only in the philosophical sense." Truth must be experienced and as true contemplatives we are to "taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. 33).

Meister Eckhart in his commentary on Genesis says: "Christ, the Truth himself in parabolical fashion in the Gospel both gives moral instruction and also transmits the general roots of profound hidden truths to those who have 'ears to hear'". (4) We all know how St. Catherine in her great love for the Church followed in the footsteps of our holy Father St. Dominic in upholding truth and sound doctrine. (5)

Forever will Mary, our Mother, be our concrete example in her devotion to truth. In her crystal-clear soul she refracted the pure rays of faith and love that she received from the Godhead and then reflected the truth she received as the moon reflects the light of the sun. Only Mary, our Mother, could have shown such queenliness in her humility and such humility in her queenliness as Mother of the Truth.

St. Paul urges us all: "You must speak the truth to one another, since we are all parts of one another" (Eph.4:25).

FOOTNOTES

All Scripture quotations are from the Jerusalem Bible

- (1) Lumen Gentium Ch. 1, Nos. 4 and 12
- (2) Dignitatis Humanae Ch. 1
- (3) St. Thomas Aquinas ST 11 - 111a q. 180 a 1
- (4) Meister Eckhart Commentary on Genesis, translation from Latin Works
- (5) St. Catherine of Siena Truth Nos. 98 - 100, p.184
and Letter No. 64, p. 121 Cavallini;
Prayer 8 in Suzanne Noffke, O.P., English translation

* * * * *

The Father's Word is my music

His Masterpiece my Art

His Poem of single Word

My inspiration

The lilting joy of my heart

Sing through me Song of the Father

Utter in me Your Love

Mirror Yourself in my barren heart

Shine through me, Mystic Love.

Sister Mary of the Holy Spirit, O.P.
Menlo Park

COMMUNIO AND MISSIO

Sr. Mary Thomas, Buffalo

Followership in a dance: this is how I see 'Communio' and 'Missio,' those two musical words, so rhythmic, so contrasting. 'Communio' is a word to lean into, a word which, lengthening into a murmur, gives rest. 'Missio,' on the contrary, strikes sparks, flashes upon your inward ear and impels you to movement. Or if you see them in color, 'Communio' gives off cool tones -- pensive blue, quiet gray-green, a touch of deep rose, the heart of violet. 'Missio' vibrates, startles with its scarlet, flame-orange, sun-gold overtones. They go well together, these two: there must be movement, infinite movement in this dance, and there must be eternal repose.

What is followership? An illusive art, a subtle science. If you love to dance, you will know at once what it is. You will know what it means to fit your every movement to the movement of another, until you move as one. Dancing alone, interpreting, you bend to the music's rhythm, even sheerly to the flow of the image in your heart. In the delight of a square dance, you are drawn to the center of the pattern, then flung out to its limits like a flower petal, deeply responsive to the caller's voice. Dancing is an authentic expression of followership and, pursuing this concept, followership is gradually perceived to be in a sense the creator of leadership, for how can there be a leader without a follower?

'Communio' and 'Missio,' those underlying currents in our life, drawing us to our center, sending us forth "to the ends of the earth," (1) then calling in the voyaging heart once more, are carefully delineated in our Basic Constitution. Number V unfolds them with deceptive brevity, leaving us to explore them in depth if we so choose.

"Withdrawn from the world" (2) It is good to step back far enough to encompass the entire world in mind and heart, to try to see it through the eyes of God. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (3) Already, for a brief moment, we may enter into the joy of our Lord:

As the Creator loves his creation,
so creation loves the Creator.

Creation, of course,
was fashioned to be adorned,
to be showered,
to be gifted with the love of
the Creator.

The entire world has been embraced
by this kiss. (4)

* * *

Glance at the sun.
See the moon and the stars.
Gaze at the beauty of earth's greenings.

Now,
think.

What delight
God gives
to human kind
with all these things.

Who gives all these shining, wonderful
gifts, if not God? (5)

Continuing to gaze, we see the dark shadow of evil falling across this primeval world. "And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." (6) In the light of God's unchanging love, we trace the swift course of the Son "coming forth as a bridegroom" (7) for the rescuing and warming and nourishing of our world, for its re-creation and ultimate glory. Even now, before the "eager longing of creation" (8) can be fulfilled, we may rediscover "the dearest freshness deep down things," (9) and know in unfaltering faith that the Spirit of God

".... over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings." (10)

So fair a world, and shall we withdraw? But the gift is for the Giver, and would tell us, itself, of its lovely littleness, that we might prize it all the more, as Juliana prizes the hazel-nut in the palm of her hand -- all that is made. "I marvelled how it might last, for methought it might suddenly have fallen to naught for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding, 'It lasteth, and ever shall last for that God loveth it.'" (11) Here, ultimately, we find the reason for withdrawal: "It needeth us to have knowing of the littleness of creatures and to naughten all thing that is made, for to love and have God that is unmade." (12) In calling us to withdraw from the world, "Love is his meaning." (13)

The dance goes on, weaving a pattern in deft agility. Hither and yon, to the left, to the right, inward, outward, in stillness, in motion, "they seek God." (14) 'Communio:' in enclosure and silence, searching the Scriptures, instant in prayer, God is sought. 'Missio:' working with their hands, doing ready penance, in purity of conscience and the joy of sisterly concord, in "the freedom of the Spirit," (15) it is God who is sought.

"Freedom of the Spirit seems the key phrase here. It is the freedom of the Spirit which makes for the essential contrasts in our life, the interplay of varying factors building up to one harmonious whole. 'Communio' and 'Missio' are reflections of the one God who calls, the triune God who is sought.

Enclosure and silence are mysterious concepts for us, and for all the world. Perhaps it is because they are incomplete, quite unfinished in themselves,

and their reaching out for fulfillment is like an unanswered question or an empty hand. Because of this quality they tell us truly that they can never be our goal, that we must look beyond them, that their role is simply to point the way. This is not to deny the importance of their role: only when we move as they direct us, do we discover their deepest values. Enclosure makes it possible for us to journey beyond the world's edge, to leave space behind and to discover experientially that "our citizenship is in heaven." (16) Silence, when freely chosen, is again a guiding angel:

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear;
Pipe me to pastures still, and be
The music that I care to hear. (17)

Searching the Scriptures must be done with "an eager heart," (18) one open through a habitual attitude of prayer, and ready to be filled. Intimated here is the fine instrument of monastic study, designed to train the whole person, mind, heart, imagination, to a precision of aim variously known as detachment or discipline. As in other contexts, we will find what we seek, and our searching is to be truly Godward.

There is a sharing in all of this. Together we live enclosed and silent, together we study, read, pray. 'Communio' reaches its deepest when it brings us together in God as we dwell in unity in his house.

The work of the hands, the ready penance, the purity of conscience and the joy of sisterly concord point to our 'Missio,' our mission of service to one another and to God in the Church.

Work of the hands need not designate manual labor exclusively: we conceive of work as the endeavor of the whole person, engaged in whatever activities may call forth our total human effort to collaborate, so to speak, in God's own creative activity -- to bring healing and health to others, to strengthen their spiritual vitality with whatever resources have been given us, to evoke their awareness of their own potentialities through our spontaneous articulation of beauty and truth. There are no limits to the extent of this service. The "work of our hands" may precede us to the city gates and far beyond, since it is God who defines our borders, and he is infinite largesse.

Nor is there any pre-set limit to "ready penance," which may well mean, predominantly, our readiness for whatever may befall. Real penance is not contrived; it need not be sought after; it is built-in. The operative word is "ready." This is intimately linked with purity of conscience, and out of this blend flows the "joy of sisterly concord" which is, as it were, the crowning peak of this progression. It is the definitive wedding of 'Communio' and 'Missio.'

Delightful is the thought of a wedding here. It relieves the mind and heart, perhaps at one time constrained by a concept of 'Communio' and 'Missio' as two opposites, tugging at us and dividing our loyalties. Martha was so filled with love, Mary's activity went so deep. We need both, to become whole, and we need them precisely in the measure designed by our unique vo-

cation. If it has been suggested that action is for this life and contemplation for the next, we may also recall that there is in our midst an interpenetration of both worlds: God's eternity distilled for us in the droplet of our now. Here, we may rest. There, we may enter into the dance depicted by our brother Blessed Fra Angelico, joining hands in fields bright with small flowers, following steps now unimaginable to us.

The deep communion lived within a monastery cannot fail to bear witness, for the whole Church, to the joy received through grace in this life and leading to glory in the future. Charity leads to fruitfulness, hidden now but to shine forth later, when we shall all be gathered by the Spirit from the four corners of the earth and brought together as a purchased people into the holy city. 'Communio' and 'Missio' will have found their ultimate fulfillment in this final movement of return to the center, where "God shall be all in all." (19)

NOTES

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) Ps. 47:11 | (11) Juliana of Norwich: Revelations of Divine Love |
| (2) LCM, Bas. Const. SV | (12) ib. |
| (3) Gen. 1:31 | (13) ib. |
| (4) St. Hildegard of Bingen, Meditations | (14) LCM, Bas. Const. SV |
| (5) ib. | (15) ib. |
| (6) Gen. 6:11 | (16) Phil. 3:20 |
| (7) Ps. 18:5 | (17) Gerard Manley Hopkins, Poems |
| (8) Rom. 8:19 | (18) LCM, Bas. Const. SV |
| (9) Gerard Manley Hopkins, Poems | (19) I Cor. 15:28 |
| (10) ib. | |



IN THE GARDEN OF TOMORROW.

1

In the garden of tomorrow
Shall my memory linger on,
Like the fragrance of the flowers
When the evening light has gone?

2

Shall remembrance of my kindness,
Of the things I've said and done,
Guild the golden halls of memory,
Like the light of setting sun?

3

Shall my footprints trace a pathway
For some weary pilgrim's weary feet,
Through this vale of earthly shadows
To the glistening mountain peaks?

4

Where the mists of Time dispersing,
There shall break upon the sight
Vision blest of Home Eternal,
And God's everlasting light?

Sr. Mary Rose Dominic Of Jesus O.P.
Summit

A T R I L O G Y

-Sr. Mary Margaret of the Trinity O.P.
Buffalo

I - A CALL AND A COVENANT

God said to Abram, "Leave your country, your family and your father's house for the land I will show you." (1) Abram obeyed. When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God made His covenant with him. He changed his name to Abraham and told him he would be the father of many nations. The changing of his name signified the changing of his destiny. Abraham remained faithful to God and His covenant and when God put him to the test commanding the sacrifice of his son, Isaac, Abraham immediately set out to fulfill the command. At the crucial moment, God intervened and blessed Abraham for his obedience: "I will shower blessings on you; I will make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven and the grains of sand on the seashore." (2) Scripture thus reveals the drama of a vocation, a call from God, yes, but also a call to fidelity.

The call of God to souls never ceases. Does not "the fidelity of the Lord remain forever"? (3) Could the crisis in the area of vocations find its source in a lack of fidelity on our part to correspond with God's terms of the covenant, namely, "Be perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect"? (4)

As a springboard for launching out into the deep on the problem of vocations, let us simply cite a key paragraph in our Constitutions: "Since the hope of the monastery depends greatly upon the successful formation of the Sisters, care must be diligently taken that those who desire to follow Christ in our way of life may be led to the fullness of the cloistered life." (5) A prayerful study of this text will indicate a marked crescendo in the dynamics of this statement reaching its "fortissimo" at the word "fullness."

What is the fullness of cloistered life if not contemplative life? If our aim be directed to "cloistered" life rather than "contemplative" life, undoubtedly we shall fall short of our goal for we will be aiming at the means rather than the end. Fullness is synonymous with perfection. Perfection is positive. Therefore only a positive striving after perfection in all its aspects and details of our contemplative life can satisfy this fullness which those who come to us in their search for union with God have a right to find in our monasteries. Can we satisfy this right with a mediocre observance? with using "loopholes" in the letter? with depreciation rather than appreciation of such safeguards of contemplative life as enclosure, silence, communal prayer, regular observance etc.? or by making dispensation the rule rather than the exception to it? If we find ourselves guilty of these negative qualities, let us be honest and admit that we are failing in our part of the "covenant."

While examining our "community conscience" on this question, we might ask ourselves if we really draw the wherewithal to nourish and sustain

our candidates in their search for God from Him in prayer. Is the motto, "To contemplate and to give to others the fruits of contemplation" a truism in our monastic life?

Perhaps a fitting conclusion to these thoughts on the crisis of vocations is no. 55 of Pope Paul's apostolic exhortation "On Renewal of the Religious Life according to the teaching of Second Vatican Council" (June 29, 1971):

"The joy of always belonging to God is an incomparable fruit of the Holy Spirit, and one which you have already tasted. Filled with the joy which Christ will preserve in you even in the midst of trial, learn to face the future with confidence. To the extent that this joy radiates from your communities, it will be a proof to everyone that the state of life which you have chosen is helping you by the threefold renunciation of your religious profession to realize the greatest possible expansion of your life in Christ. Seeing you and the life you lead, the young will be able to understand well the appeal that Jesus never ceases to make among them. The Council, in fact, brings this to mind: 'The example of your life constitutes the finest recommendation of the institute and the most effective invitation to embrace religious life.' (6) There is no doubt, moreover, that by showing you profound esteem and great affection, bishops, priests, parents and Christian educators will awaken in many the desire to follow in your footsteps, in response to that call of Jesus which never ceases to be heard among His followers."

"Again the angel of the Lord called from heaven to Abraham and said, 'I swear by myself, says the Lord, since you have done this and have not withheld your only son I will indeed bless you, and you will surely multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, as the sands on the seashore. Your descendants shall possess the gates of their enemies. In your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed me'." (7)

* * * * *

II - A RESPONSE: FIAT

". . . and in your descendants all the nations of the earth shall find blessing — all this because you obeyed my command." (8)

Mary, true daughter of Abraham, sang in joy of the fulfillment which her immortal 'Fiat' set in motion: "He has upheld Israel his servant, ever mindful of his mercy; even as he promised our fathers, promised Abraham and his descendants forever." (9)

"Fiat!" "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." She could have used other words, but she did not. With quiet deliberation flowing from her pure, virginal heart, Mary (ever our "leading Lady") bowed in acquiescence to the Will of Him who was at once her Creator, her Redeemer, her Sanctifier -- her Father, her Son, her Spouse. "Be it done to me according to Thy word." (10) The promise of Redemption was bursting forth into bloom as a bud opens its petals to the light of the sun.

"Fiat!" This is a word to be pondered for it is a key word in the vocabulary of every contemplative and a dominant note in the great symphony of religious life. "Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart." (11) What things? The Word of God in the writings of the prophets and psalmist, the mysteries in the life of her Son, the Word-made-flesh, unfolding daily before her eyes -- truly this word was God's own Divine Son and her Son too. Mary contemplated His conception, His birth, the words of Simeon, the finding of her Child in the temple, and later, His life at Nazareth, His teaching, His miracles, His passion, death, resurrection and ascension to the Father. It is because she uttered her 'fiat' that we are enabled to ponder in our hearts these mysteries also.

"Fiat!" We also make this word our own as the "yes" to the daily manifestations of God's Will in our lives. Hewn from the rock of Dominic, we too must utter only the truth and the spoken "yes" must become a reality. "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the Will of my Father in heaven." (12) And so the spoken fiat is above all a word to be lived.

"Fiat!" This word is fittingly the key to salvation history. The creation of the universe, the world and mankind was accomplished by the "Fiat" of their Creator. As related in Genesis, when God said His "Let it be" so it was done. The fiat of Mary at the Incarnation brought to mankind its Savior and Redeemer whose whole life as Son of God-made-man was one fiat to the Will of His Heavenly Father. "The One who sent me is with me. He has not deserted me since I always do what pleases Him." (13)

"Fiat!" "Consummatum est! Now it is finished!" (14) The supreme sacrifice on the altar of the cross merited for a fallen race the supreme gift of its Redemption. God, as it were, hastens to meet His prodigal children to clothe them with the heavenly gift of adoption into His kingdom of light, of peace, of love, of eternal happiness.

"Fiat!" We do well to ponder these words of Lumen Gentium regarding Mary's fiat and the part it played in our Redemption: "The Father of Mercies willed that the consent of the predestined Mother should precede the Incarnation, so that, just as a woman contributed to death, so also a woman should contribute to life. . . . She gave to the world that very Life which renews all things. . . . She devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son. In subordination and along with Him, by the grace of Almighty God, she served in the mystery of Redemption." (15) Parallel to these words are those of our Constitution: "Among the counsels the vow of obedience is outstanding, that vow by which a person consecrates herself wholly to God, and whose acts approach more closely to the end of our profession, which is the perfection of charity. By this the nuns share in their own way in the work of our Redemption, following the example of the Handmaid of the Lord, who through her obedience was made the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race. (St. Irenaeus, Adversus Haereses III, 22,4)" (16)

"Fiat!" This one word encompasses and integrates every phase and aspect of our lives making of them a living prayer to the Father in Christ through the intercession and example of Mary. Every joy, sorrow, failure, success, sickness, health, and even death itself is made holy and filled with love by a ceaseless 'fiat.'

* * * * *

III - WITNESS: MONASTIC VALUES

We come to the third element of this "mini" trilogy introduced by the successor of St. Peter today. He speaks to our hearts: "It is especially in Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Church, that religious life comes to understand itself most deeply and find its sign of certain hope. . . . Mary showed throughout her life all those values to which religious consecration is directed. She is Mother of religious in being Mother of Him who was consecrated and sent, and in her 'fiat' and 'magnificat' religious life finds the totality of its surrender to and the thrill of its joy in the consecratory action of God." These words of our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, to religious mark the rhythm of our religious contemplative life as a baton in the skilled hands of the maestro.

"Mary showed throughout her life all those values to which religious consecration is directed." This sentence from the above cited quotation sets the tempo of the following notes on monastic values.

Thomas Merton O.C.S.O. concluded his treatise on the "Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality" with the words: "In the night of our technological barbarism, monks must be as trees which exist silently in the dark and by their vital presence purify the air." (17) This statement vividly portrays the *raison d'etre* of the monastic calling which is no small challenge in contemporary society.

Society is in turmoil and the human heart is restless. The cause of this restlessness is a failure in some respects to understand and pursue a truly human goal in its most authentic sense. St. Augustine described it well: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You." Today the pace of life is ever more rapid and noise fills every moment with distractions of every sort. Unless God is the sought after end of the human journey that journey is misdirected and the human person does not reach his or her full capacity in God. When the conscious goal is atheistic materialism, science, politics and even violence become powerful means. Perhaps this is what Father Merton meant when he labeled this age the "night of our technological barbarism."

In contrast, the psalmist compares the just man to a "tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth fruit in due season." (18) Here is the contemplative ideal, that monastic "trees" watered by the river

of divine grace should "exist silently in the dark and by their vital presence purify the air," of alien and destructive elements. As contemplatives we need always to assess our values and keep our eyes fixed on the true goal so as to use aright the traditional means given to us.

Some of the values proposed for our consideration at the West Springfield meeting in June 1982 -- prayer/work, silence/community, solitude/hospitality -- at first glance seem polarized and a common denominator must be found to reconcile one with the other. The solution is simple. We have only to turn to the basic values of religious life to find the answer, namely, the evangelical counsels based on the theological virtues. From these flow the very ones chosen for this review.

Prayer and Work: Prayer and work are united in an obedience based on faith. "When you pray, pray thus: Our Father . . . your Will be done" (19) "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the Will of My Father who is in heaven." (20) Is there a better prayer than that uttered by Mary at the Annunciation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to Thy Word"? (21) So fruitful was the prayer of her life that her grace-filled soul drew down from Heaven the very Son of God. In these instances and many more can be found the reconciliation of prayer and work through obedience based on faith. The vowed religious merits doubly by every act of religion: the merit of obedience and the merit of the virtue of religion. Her life is a prayer, her prayer is her life. "To contemplate" (prayer); "to give to others the fruits of contemplation" (work).

Silence and Community: At the heart of all silence is that interior silence that cries out "Nescivi" -- the emptiness of all that would clamor in the heart and take possession of one's soul, rather than fill the void with Him Who Is. "Be still and know that I am God." (22) Be still with the silence of nothingness. Our Heavenly Father told our sister, St. Catherine, "I am He Who Is, you are she who is not." This is possessing the poverty of nothingness. A poor religious, i.e., a religious endowed with the riches of poverty, possesses all things for "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (23) Small wonder then, that St. Thomas Aquinas requested for his reward from the Lord, "Nothing but Thyself, O Lord." Isaiah tells us, "In silence and in hope your strength lies." (24) The silent religious loses her identity in her community for her life, hidden with Christ in God in the silence of her communion with her Beloved, is enveloped by the communal family of which she is a part since she loses her 'self' in her zeal for the common good.

Solitude and Hospitality: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about many things. One thing only is necessary; Mary has chosen the better portion and she shall not be deprived of it." (25) Mary is portrayed as the contemplative totally absorbed in the solitude of contemplating the Master. Solitude is not mere aloneness but an aloneness with God. This was Mary's choice; this is supposedly the choice of everyone entering the contemplative life in a monastery. Mary's solitude was her hospitality for she centered her entire attention on her Lord and Master while Martha served but with the anxiety of the many things to divide her attention. Would we say Mary was less hospitable

because she sat at the Master's feet while Martha served? The Lord did not think so. It was Martha he chided when she complained about her sister. Another example we might cite is that of Our Blessed Mother, who, after she heard of her cousin's pregnancy in her old age, immediately set out into the hill country to visit Elizabeth and help her in her need. Surely no one was more absorbed in contemplation in the solitude of her heart, now the tabernacle of her God and Son, than Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, serving Him in the person of her aged cousin. These two examples of charity from which flowed a chaste love for God and neighbor are not beyond imitation in monastic living. One need not leave the monastery to find solitude or practice hospitality.

In summary, prayer and work are united in an obedience based on faith; silence and community are fused in poverty founded on hope; solitude and hospitality are wedded in chastity rooted in charity. It will be for the individual to "seek (God) in secret, to ponder and pray, so that the word which has come forth from the mouth of God may not return to Him void, but may prosper in those things for which He sent it." (26) To glean the riches of these values in our Dominican contemplative life, then, we must study them in the light of Truth, the Word of God, Who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." (27)

Reverting to Merton's "Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality" (cf.17) we conclude this trilogy: "In our age in which everyone else is carried away with the exigencies of a great cultural and political struggle, the monk has, as his primary function, the duty to be a monk -- to be a man of God, that is to say, a man who lives by and for God alone. Only by doing this can the monk preserve what is rich and vital in his monastic and Christian tradition. In order to be what he is meant to be, the monk must rise above the common ethical level of humanitarian paganism, and live the 'theological' life centered on God, a life of pure faith, of hope in God's providence, of charity in the Holy Spirit. He must live in the 'Mystery of Christ'."

* * * * *

NOTES

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| 1) Gen. 12:1 | 11) Luke 2:19,51 | 19) Matt. 6:10 |
| 2) Gen. 22:17 | 12) Matt. 7:21 | 20) Matt. 7:21 |
| 3) Ps. 116:2 | 13) John 8:29 | 21) Luke 1:38 |
| 4) Matt. 5:48 | 14) John 19:30 | 22) Ps. 46:10 |
| 5) 1971 LCM #118 S1 | 15) Lumen Gentium #56 | 23) Matt. 5:3 |
| 6) Perfectae Caritatis #24 | 16) 1971 LCM #24 S1 | 24) Is. 30:15 |
| 7) Gen. 22:15-18 | 17) Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality by Thomas Merton, | 25) Luke 10:41,42 |
| 8) Gen. 22:18 | O.C.S.O. Abbey of Gethsemane, | 26) 1971 LCM, Basic Constitution of Nuns #1 S11 |
| 9) Luke 2:54,55 | copyright 1957 | 27) John 14:5 |
| 10) Luke 1:38 | 18) Ps. 1:3 | |

Mary's Answer

Mary, when Gabriel uttered God's sublime request,
To your divine Maternity, you meekly answered, "Yes".
So hold Him in your arms, and never let Him go:

"I must; for Jesus came to save the world, you know.

Mary, did not the ancient prophets one and all
Foretell what dreadful things the Savior would befall?
And did not Simeon warn that sorrow would be thine?

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; His Will is mine."

O Mother, see these tender tiny hands and feet;
This little curly head, this baby smile, so sweet.
Won't you be sad to watch this lovely infant grow?

"The marks of toil, his likeness to ourselves must show."

Is it not sad that He must leave your sweet abode?
To seek His sheep through every rough and rugged road?
Would you not spare Him all this loneliness and pain?

"No! I would share them with Him, o'er and o'er again."

This helpless babe now clings to you so trustfully;
God wills that helpless you must stand beside the tree;
And when He says, "behold Thy Son," what will you say?

"Into my broken Heart, all men must find their way."

"For gladly I accept the task of motherhood
which Jesus gave to me when by His Cross I stood;
Nor shall I ever leave Christ's Mystic Self alone
until in you, His members, Christ's Life is fully grown."

(By Sister Regina Marie Gentry, OP)
Syracuse, New York

* * * * *

THE SANCTITY OF CURUPIRA

Curupira Ido Tubá was born January 22, 1901 in the village of Carariacá, Pará, Brazil, the child of Amazon Indian parents. Baptized three years later, she was adopted in 1911 by a Brazilian family of European descent and raised as a fervent Catholic. She entered the Monastery of Christ the King, São Paulo, in 1935, taking the name of Sister Mary of the Immaculate Conception, and was solemnly professed in 1944. After nearly forty years as a Dominican nun, she passed to her eternal reward on September 19, 1974. The following is a brief account by her own community of her life and holiness.

Curupira was the only person in the community, indeed in the world, who had any thought of the holiness of Curupira... And this thought she held with an unshakeable certitude, the certitude of those who know that God alone is Holy. She never doubted that the Heavenly Father loved her enough and was powerful enough to hold her nothingness in his arms. Yes, we think that recognition of the sanctity of Curupira on the part of the Church would prove very interesting as an effort to convince people that it is not the saints who are saints, but God in them, in the very measure that they are convinced of their own nothingness and allow themselves to be invaded by love.

Her virtues were admittedly rather strange, but none the less heroic for all that. Here is one example out of a thousand: she reached the point of slapping a sister who had the nerve to come into "her" refectory while she was washing the floor. But before Communion, with what tenderness did she embrace her victims: "My dear little sister, you know it is because I am an Indian, but I do really love you!"

She used to say that purity and joy were her favorite virtues. Once she confided that she had never sinned against purity. Such Dominican virtues! In fact, one found her always and everywhere cheerful as a bird, except in her terrible moments of anger... She was especially pure of heart: very affectionate, tender, winning even, but never possessive. Although deeply attached to Mother Reginald, she knew how to accept her other prioresses with the same respect full of affection, and on the death of that particular one, she gave proof of an admirable supernatural spirit.

Possibly as early as her first call to the religious life at the age of eighteen, the day of her first Communion, she had had an intuition of her "sanctity," for at that time she began to write her life, unfortunately thrown on the fire out of fear that it would prove an impediment to her admission to the novitiate. But it was particularly on the famous day when she assisted at Mass in our chapel and someone said to her that it was the feast of St. Rose of Lima, the first saint of Latin America, that she made this formal reply: "As for me, I will be the first saint of Brazil." And a little later on she added: "A one-hundred per cent Brazilian saint, without a single drop of European blood, except for the blood of the Franciscan missionaries whom my ancestors ate."

During her final illness, she advised us to preserve carefully all her "relics": a collection of straw hats, feather dusters and brooms. One day, she happened to notice that someone was burning her belongings in the garden: "I see very well that you do not understand me..." She also enjoined us to transform her cell into a chapel because many people would come there to pray.

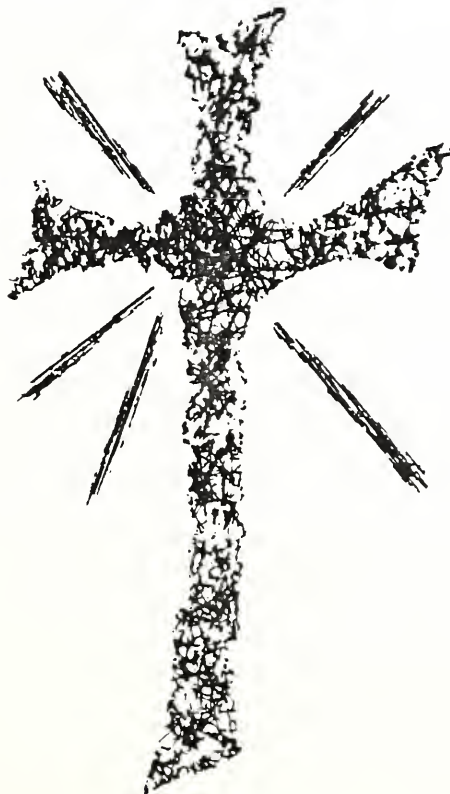
WE REQUEST THAT ANYONE OBTAINING FAVORS THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF
CURUPIRA, PLEASE COMMUNICATE WITH US:

Mosteiro Cristo Rei
Caixa postal: 85
18130 São Roque S.P.
BRASIL

contributed by: Soeur Marie Damien du Sacre Coeur, O.P.

Editor's Note: As this issue of DMS was going to the press, we received the following communication from Sr. Marie Damien:

"We thank you for the excellent translation of the article on Curupira. I have one correction to make: Curupira never actually slapped any of her sisters, but as she spoke with much gesticulation and would come closer and closer to the sister in her efforts to make her understand, one could easily believe that she had slapped the person! A sister who had worked closely with her on various different jobs has brought out the truth of the matter."



1. THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN Fruit: Contrition
My Mother, give to my spirit, a spirit of penance; to my soul, contrition;
and to my eyes, a fountain of tears, after the example of our Father
St. Augustine, the Father of our Rule, so that I may weep for my great sins.
2. THE SCOURGING Fruit: Mortification
My Lady and my Mother, grant that I may be mortified even in the least
things, to please only you and my Beloved Master.
3. THE CROWNING WITH THORNS Fruit: Love of humiliations
My dear Mother, you know that I have a great horror of humiliations...
Give me the grace to love this precious virtue with all my soul.
4. JESUS CARRIES THE CROSS Fruit: Patience
My Mother, give me a great patience in all that happens to your daughter,
particularly in the most sorrowful hours.
5. THE CRUCIFIXION Fruit: Love of the Cross
My Mother, give me a generous love of the Cross of my Divine Master, so
that I can say without fear that I am a faithful spouse.

Grant, Lord
that I may be
a temple of preaching,
a house of prayer
and of your praise
forever

Feast of St. Albert the Great
Breviary of the Order of Preachers

A SUITABLE PLACE

Homily preached at the Mass of Blessing of new Monastery
and the Establishment of the Monastic Enclosure at
Saint Dominic's Monastery, Washington, DC
Rev. Augustine DiNoia, O.P.
May 4, 1985

There is only one letter of our Holy Father St. Dominic extant. It was written at just about this time of year in 1220. It opens with these words:

Friar Dominic, Master of the Preachers, to the dear prioress and the whole convent of nuns of Madrid. Health and daily progress. We rejoice greatly and give thanks to God because of your holy lives and because he has liberated you from the corruption of the world. Up to the present you have not had a suitable place for the carrying out of your religious life. But now... by God's grace you possess buildings sufficiently well adapted for the maintenance of the regular life.

We may suppose that our Holy Father would want to address these or similar words to this little flock of his daughters, our much-loved sisters in this monastery on 16th Street in Washington.

Notice the phrase in his letter: "a suitable place." This phrase describes his constant goal in his work of establishing the first communities of Dominican nuns. Indeed, throughout the literature recording the histories of these and subsequent communities --- and clearly in the history of the founding of this monastery, a suitable place is the goal passionately, persistently, boldly sought. This suitability is judged by many factors, some mundane, others intangible. We shall have occasion later in this sermon to ask: "Suitable for what?" --- not irreverently, of course, but in order to come to a deeper understanding of the Dominican contemplative life which we solemnly inaugurate today. For the moment, let us learn something of the determination with which St. Dominic and now his daughters have sought the suitable place.

We see St. Dominic intimately involved in seeking suitable places for the three monastic foundations with which he was directly involved in his lifetime: Prouille, Madrid and Rome. In Madrid, it was fairly easy: In May 1220 he simply moved the friars from their priory and moved into it the group of women converted by him and the preachers and living apart from each other since 1218. It was to this newly established community, now in a suitable place, that the letter quoted earlier was addressed.

Finding a suitable place for his other monastic foundations was not so easy. St. Dominic was intermittently engaged from 1207 until the end of his life in 1221 in the endeavor to establish his first community of nuns at Prouille on a solid basis: bartering for land, securing endowments, overseeing lawsuits, obtaining the necessary protection, and so on. So direct was his involvement that Vicaire could write that St. Dominic "sold, bought, exchanged parcels of land, not without a certain ability for business... in order to establish an unbroken domain..." for the monastic enclosure at Prouille. Always the goal is: a suitable place.

And finally, St. Sixtus in Rome to which he devoted much of his energies in the final months of his life in the spring of 1221. Settling the sixty or so nuns who would finally have their suitable place at San Sisto by mid-April 1221 posed quite a challenge to Dominic's organizational and diplomatic skills. Here it was not only securing adequate property, endowment and protection that engaged his attention. A more subtle challenge awaited him in the form of the celebrated miraculous icon of the Blessed Virgin in the church of the nuns of Santa Maria in Tempulo, one of the groups that was to take vows in the Dominican Order and be established at San Sisto. This miraculous icon had always manifested a pronounced unwillingness to be moved from Santa Maria in Tempulo. When it was once carried off by Pope Sergius III even to so august a setting as the Lateran, it reportedly returned to Santa Maria "flying through the window like a bird." Well, the nuns of Santa Maria in Tempulo agreed to make profession to St. Dominic and relocate at San Sisto only on the condition that they be released from their vows to him if their famous icon --- which would naturally accompany them to their new home --- returned to Santa Maria as it had been known to do in the past. St. Dominic agreed to this condition. During the night of April 18, 1221 --- the day on which all the nuns were finally gathered at San Sisto --- St. Dominic, the cardinals Nicholas of Tusculum and Stefano of Fossanova, along with chosen brethren and lay people, all barefooted, carried the icon on their shoulders in solemn procession to San Sisto where the nuns, also barefooted, awaited them in the church. There it was solemnly installed in the restored basilica. This event was witnessed by a seventeen year old nun, Sister Cecilia, who when she reported these and other incidents had reached her eighties and was able to assert --- happily and with great relief --- that the icon was still in place with the nuns of San Sisto.

There were no lengths, as we can see, to which St. Dominic would not go in his quest for "a suitable place" for his nuns.

Anyone acquainted with the story of the long pilgrimage which has brought these Dominican Nuns to two acres on Sixteenth Street will be struck by the boldness, determination and struggle --- all focused on this single goal, a suitable place for the monastic enclosure and the contemplative life it affords. Mother Mary of the Angels, O.P. and her companion, Sister Mary of the Blessed Sacrament, O.P., left the monastery in Union City, New Jersey, in 1907 to found a Dominican monastic community in Baker City, Oregon. After two years of struggle and even though other nuns from Union City joined them, Mother Mary of the Angels reported to the Bishop that the support needed to sustain a monastic community was simply lacking in Baker City. She prayed for guidance, as she reports, and opened the Catholic Directory to the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin. After she had written to the Bishop there, he invited her to come and visit. As a result of this visit, Mother Mary of the Angels was convinced that La Crosse would provide a suitable place for a Dominican monastic community. She went back to Baker City, sold the house there, and on July 2, 1909, gathered her nuns for the arduous trip by rail to La Crosse. Since they were desperately poor and would be unable to purchase food and drink on the train, one of the nuns baked six dozen biscuits which together with water and coffee would provide their sustenance for the week long rail trip.

We can sense something of the struggle these nuns faced in the ensuing

years from the words addressed to the community in a letter in 1959 from the Bishop of La Crosse, John P. Treacy: "Like every good work, there must be a humble beginning, and the more precious the work and the higher the purpose of its founding, the greater must be the sacrifice in accomplishing that work... Christ's Church itself came to us through much suffering. All our religious orders began with the greatest sacrifices of poor and humble men and women... No more brilliant example of this is there than the somewhat more than humble beginning of the (Dominican Nuns) in La Crosse fifty years ago." Throughout this struggle and sacrifice, we can observe the same determined pursuit of a suitable place to sustain their Dominican contemplative life.

The first band established itself in a house on Avon Street. When this location proved unsuitable, Mother Mary of the Angels had the house divided in two and moved to a location on George Street. But in the 1950's the George Street monastery was twice flooded by the waters of the Mississippi and finally proved unsafe for habitation. Under the direction of Mother Mary of the Immaculate Conception, who had come from West Springfield with a group of nuns to augment the La Crosse community, the nuns moved again to South Avenue.

Now in 1985 they have come to this two-acre tract of land in the great city of Washington, to a suitable location bounded by Sixteenth, and Emerson, and Farragut, and Piney Branch, to this ample and wonderfully designed monastery building and chapel. The distance between Union City and Washington --just about 200 miles-- has taken them seventy-eight years and many thousands of miles to traverse --- all in the bold and untiring pursuit of a suitable place. It is not surprising that their story reminds us of St. Dominic himself at Prouille, and Madrid, and San Sisto in Rome. A suitable place.

Perhaps you have asked yourselves: what makes a location suitable? This is a difficult question which cannot really be answered in the abstract. There is a better question, however, one that will lead us to understand the determination that marked the pursuit of a suitable place for the enclosure --- by St. Dominic and by this community today joyfully established in Washington. The location must be suitable for what? for what purpose? to serve what particular ends? Even an incomplete answer to this question will help us to come to a deeper penetration of this ceremony of dedication and, more importantly, of the Dominican contemplative, monastic life itself.

There are, of course, several fairly obvious answers to the question: suitable for what? The place must be suited to the celebration of the sacred liturgy --- the Hours and the Eucharist --- which are at the very heart of this way of life, and thus suited to the construction of an ample and well-fitted chapel --- such as the one provided here by the care and skill of the architects and the construction manager and their fellow-workers. The buildings, the grounds, the setting --- as an ensemble, they must afford the tranquility needed for a life of silence, prayer, work, study and community in Christ.

But the suitability of the place needs to be viewed from a deeper and more integral point of view: it must be suitable for the monastic enclosure.

Apart from the Eucharist itself, the most solemn part of today's ceremony will come at the end of Mass when Archbishop James Hickey formally erects here the papal enclosure, that space physically marked out by the choir screen, the locked doors to the cloister, the panels in the visiting parlors, and the wooden fence encompassing these lovely two acres. But, as you can imagine, the monastic enclosure is something much more intangible and indeed spiritual than simply a marking out of fences and locked doors. It is at this point that we come to the deepest mystery of the Dominican contemplative life and of the determined pursuit of the suitable place we have already observed in some detail.

For in the person of this successor of the apostles, God himself acts to claim these two acres as, if you will, a beach-head. For in this place is established in a particularly intense and heightened form a glimpse of the future of the world and of humankind with it.

The enclosure --- far from being primarily an exclusion or rejection of the world outside --- compresses the whole of the human reality with all its infinite longing for union with God and affirms it absolutely without reservation. We wrest these two acres of the city of Washington and "enclose" them to bring into existence the beginning of the destiny of the world. For the enclosure affords --- not by human discovery or provision, but by the action of God's grace itself --- a place suited to the seeking of union with God as that end which surpasses all others and in which all others are ultimately comprised. This is the high destiny to which every human being is called and to which the whole cosmos itself is stretching. In this suitable place, the end of the world begins to be.

I close with St. Dominic's words: "Friar Dominic, Master of the Preachers, to the dear prioress and the whole convent of nuns of Washington. Health and daily progress. We rejoice greatly and give thanks to God because of your holy lives and because he has freed you from the corruption of the world. Up to the present, you have not had a suitable place for the carrying out of your religious life. But now... by God's grace you possess buildings sufficiently well adapted for the maintenance of the regular life."

* * * * *

FR. VICAIRE ON THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

From September 16 to 19, 1984, the "Fédération St. Thomas" which unites the three monasteries of Belgium-South held a workshop directed by the well-known historian, F.H.M. Vicaire, O.P., on the topic: The contemplative life according to the spirit of St. Dominic. Participants included members of six monasteries from Belgium, Flanders and Northern France, as well as the religious assistant of the federation and the promoter for the nuns and sisters of Flanders. Father Vicaire spoke successively on the following five topics:

1. Contemplation in the life and holiness of St. Dominic

All the historical sources which are available confirm the testimony of B. Cecilia: "He was a great man of prayer." The Nine Ways of Prayer of St. Dominic give a picture of his intense prayer.

From the text of Jordan of Saxony on the beginning of the Order, which contains valuable symbolic theology, we know that St. Dominic was inspired by a great love for God and his fellowmen, an intense contemplative charity.

Dominic entered the chapter of the cathedral of Osma, a chapter being in the Middle Ages the contemplative way of living par excellence. The canons assured the presence of prayer in the diocese. They followed the Rule of St. Augustine, and in their formation the Conferences of Cassian had an important part; this writing is a veritable tract on the contemplative life.

From 1206 Dominic was totally captured by preaching, but that did not in the least diminish his contemplative life. He always carried with him the books necessary for study and prayer. His breviary has been preserved. On the way from one place to another he would have the brothers walk before him, asking them to be silent and pray, saying: "And now let us consider our Savior." We know how he passed the nights praying almost without interruption. It required simple heroism to lead at the same time such a life of prayer and of preaching.

Dominic's prayer was penetrated by psalms and hymns. It sprung forth from and reposed on a theological (faith, hope, charity) inspiration, but it also found a physical expression. It was a cry, a call of belief in the evangelical Truth, which is Christ the Redeemer. The contemplation of the crucified Lord moved him to tears again and again. He knew the mystical union, its sorrows and deep happiness.

These rich and varied forms of prayer, of contemplative prayer, precede his apostolic animation. This is the topic of the third lecture.

2. What is contemplation?

The term is not biblical, but stems from Greek philosophy. Clement of Alexandria brought it into Christian theology. Different elements of Plotinus' detailed definition of the term must be corrected to fit its Christian meaning.

According to Plotinus, contemplation (1) is reserved to an elite, rich enough in time and money to be able to free themselves from earthly solicitude; (2) can be obtained by personal exertion; (3) breaks social bonds by escaping from worldly care; (4) reaches its goal by contact with the first Principle of all things. Christian contemplation, on the other hand, (1) is meant for everyone; (2) is a pure gift of God; (3) is a source of greater charity, because true contemplation guides back to one's fellow men; (4) strives toward union with God, through a being-grasped by love.

Grace always has a contemplative form, the kernel of a vivid belief in Christ, which is directed to participation in his life. And the life of Christ is love, poured out in him by the Spirit of God.

Every love strives for union, for the biblical "knowing" that means a union enclosing the whole person, a being-gripped that leads to the highest contemplation: the entrance into the Trinitarian movement of God's own life.

And this grace calls for an attitude of life, corresponding to the claims of the Sermon on the Mount. Contemplation is a basic trait of the Gospel.

There are many kinds of contemplation: esthetic, poetic, philosophic, scientific, religious... but every kind encloses more or less clearly four elements:

(1) an act of the intelligence (spirit); (2) a moment of stop, of rest; (3) a taking-up, very deep and active; (4) an intervention of the will to taste, to enjoy.

According to St. Thomas (2a 2ae, 180, 3 1) contemplation is "intuitus simplex veritatis", the simple intuition of Truth. It is the end of a whole series of exercises: "Meditatio, ruminatio, cogitatio" of intelligence and will in search of the object of their longing.

There is no Christian contemplation without Christ, without thanksgiving (Eucharistia). Belief gives movement and content to this gift of the Holy Spirit.

3. The connection between contemplation and the apostolic life of preaching in St. Dominic

In St. Dominic the life of preaching, the proclamation of Truth, springs forth from his contemplation, because this makes him similar to Christ, who calls him to work with all his forces for the salvation of men. The intensity of his contemplation of Christ forms him into a co-Savior.

As a student in Palencia he sold his Bible, enriched with personal annotations, to found a "charity", that is, a regular distribution of food to the poor. We must understand and grasp very well that by doing this, he sold his whole theological library, a whole capital of exegesis and spirituality. This was a "corporal" work of mercy; it would be followed later on by many "spiritual" works of mercy.

From time to time, the missionary impulse would become stronger in Dominic, but without release. The mysterious "Cumans" would beckon to him for help.

At the example of Abraham, Dominic left his country, knowing the deepest expropriation (asceticism): he had no convent of his own, no cell, no bed. These things struck his brethren most during his last illness and at his death.

When evangelizing, St. Dominic used two weapons: (1) the prayer of intercession, mediation; and (2) his fiery, ardent heart. The first found its expression in the Liturgy as well as in his personal prayer. He prayed for temporal, material help, e.g., at the accident in San Sisto, when the architect met his death, but recovered life by the intercession of Dominic. He also prayed for spiritual help, in general or specifically for one person or for himself, in thanksgiving or compunction. (2) An ardent heart and an incomparable energy characterize his days, because they are fed by nights of prayer. All his decisions grow out of contemplation; the Holy Spirit inspires him at every important step, e.g., when he transfers Brother Reginald from Bologna to Paris. A divine instinct guides him, e.g., when he spreads the brethren all over Europe (August 15, 1217): "I know what I am doing."

The whole condition of Dominic can be gathered in this one synthesis, which he took from Etienne de Muret, a great contemplative, and which he had inserted in the Constitutions: "... that the brethren only speak with God or of God." From this synthesis rises the unity between prayer and preaching.

4. The contemplative life in the Primitive Constitutions of the Order

St. Dominic was a great legislator. His constitutional conception was steady and solid, but he wished the Constitutions to be flexible and to be enriched by the current of the times. This idea has a touch of genius.

Between 1216 and 1221, he himself wrote two "rules", by which are meant the Constitutions, the rule being that of St. Augustine. In 1221 he wrote the rule of San Sisto for the nuns in Rome. In 1228 this rule was given to the Penitents of St. Mary Magdalen in Germany by the Holy See. We still possess these texts and we know indirectly what must have been the rule of Prouilhe, as sisters from Prouilhe were called to Rome in order to form the community of San Sisto in the spirit of Dominic.

In 1221 a unity in observances for the nuns and the friars of Toulouse was reached. The difference between the primitive "rule" (constitutions) of the friars and the "rule" of San Sisto for the nuns lies on two levels: (1) the enclosure, which already existed for the brethren, but which Dominic wanted very severe for the nuns, especially because he had in view the placement of a convent of friars next to a monastery of nuns. The juridical norms (papal enclosure) are of a later date. (2) Manual labor, in line with the usual monastic tradition. Dominic replaced this for the brethren by the spiritual task of the Preachers, that is, preaching and all that concerns it.

What forms the basis for an apostolic community? ("apostolic" in the meaning of the 13th century, that is, imitation of the Apostles)

- (1) unanimity, which according to the rule of St. Augustine, is expressed in regular observance;
- (2) prayer, which makes the community contemplative.

Prayer and unanimity together fashion the impact that the community has on its surroundings.

Summary of the observances according to the "rule" of 1216 for the brethren:

- (1) enclosure: "The brethren shall not go out for study." A Master of the University comes into the convent. This lies at the origin of, e.g., a university-chair in the house of St. Jacques in Paris.
- (2) silence: should be kept severely. There were special punishments for shortcomings. "Silentium Pater Praedicatorum"
- (3) retirement from the world.
- (4) collective moral formation: especially by the chapter of faults.
- (5) formation to prayer in the novitiate. The Liturgy contains three major hours, which everyone should attend, whatever occupation one has in regard to study and preaching. Two particular devotions are the Office of the Virgin, which was recited when getting up, and the Office of the Dead.
- (6) study as the basis. Dominic intended to have a doctor of theology in every house to give lectures.

5. The proper character of the Dominican contemplative life for our nuns

A text of 1215 says: "The friars preach the truth of the evangelical Word."

Our contemplative life flourishes in the care to work out the welfare, the salvation of men; its service is the source of inspiration for the prayer of intercession and calls forth the missionary vocation. This vocation works on different levels, increasing the number of Christians or their merits, by feeding their belief, by helping the fervent to progress, by developing the mystical experience. The mystics of the Rhineland owe their flourishing to the preaching of the brethren in the monasteries. Other countries knew a similar rise of mysticism.

The contemplative life of the nuns has a five-fold character:

- (1) Their contemplative life is directed to the salvation of souls.
- (2) Reciprocally, the theological study of the brethren has an influence and a repercussion on the contemplation of the sisters: there is mutual impregnation by brotherly talks, by writings, etc.
- (3) The life of the nuns occupies a special place in the organization of a strong institute. (Leo Moulin, an agnostic jurist and professor of the University of Brussels, calls the Dominican legislation "a grand cathedral.")
- (4) Every branch of the Order plays its own role in the whole of the Order. The nuns are not a reverberation of the brethren.
- (5) By radiation of holiness, by hospitable reception, by Liturgy and by mutual cooperation with the other branches of the family, the nuns fulfill the specific task of the Order: preaching.

This report of Fr. Vicaire's conferences was prepared for us by Sr. Myriam of the Zelem, Belgium, monastery.

* * * * *

JOSEPH

Sister Mary of the Assumption, O.P.
West Springfield

The purpose of this paper is to honor St. Joseph: Patron of the Universal Church, patron of the contemplative life, patron of the first American Dominican province. Today there is specialized study of Joseph called Josephology, which is a theological study of his dignity, mission and prerogatives. A center for research and documentation on Josephology is Saint Joseph's Oratory, Mount Royal, Montreal. International symposia on Josephology are held occasionally. In September of this year an international symposium was held in Poland.

The encyclical, Quamquam Pluries by Leo XIII, is considered today the charter of Josephology. Joseph, the humble carpenter, is glorified in heaven to the extent to which he was hidden on earth. He to whom the Incarnate Word gave obedience has now an incomparable power of intercession. "Just as Mary, Mother of the Savior, is spiritual mother of all Christians...so also Joseph looks on all Christians as having been confided to him. He is the defender of the Church which is truly the house of God and the kingdom of God on earth." ¹

Basic to the position of Joseph is the fact of his virginal and true marriage to the virgin Mother of God. "Jesus is the fruit of this marriage, not because He was generated by it, but because He was received and reared within it" ² according to God's reason for bringing it into existence."

Joseph was "probably a native of Bethlehem, or at least he owned property there. It was primarily because of property taxes that he was obliged to be registered in the Roman census at Bethlehem, for the Romans would ³ not have been interested in his Davidic descent as such."

Jesus is called "the carpenter's son". ⁴ The Greek word for carpenter, *tekton*, like the Latin *faber*, signifies a craftsman or artisan. The spouse of Mary was "both a dreamer and a worker. His role in the mystery of God's plan was made clear to him in dreams; yet he ⁵ had all the essential practicality of a carpenter."

We hear little of Joseph in the Gospels but he is there. John calls Jesus the "son of Joseph". ⁶ As Joseph the carpenter taught the Divine Child to smooth planks of wood, he also showed himself the model of a conscientious workman and dutiful son of Israel. Père Lagrange describes Joseph as a "man of silence and a contemplator of mysteries."

Joseph the carpenter supported his family with his trade. Artisans of his time did not have their shops in their own homes. So Joseph's home would have been his refuge and delight in the evenings and on holidays when he would have precious hours of family intimacy with the Divine Child and Mary, the most womanly of all women. There were no others in Nazareth who shared the King's secret except Mary and Joseph. Their evenings together, consecrated by unselfish and mutual love of the Child, opened the eyes of husband and wife to the heights of nobility in each other. These were hours for deepening, widening the mutual love that made them one. "To Joseph, Mary's flaming sanctity would light up her every act, her smiles, her least gesture, her face in repose, to make of them a fire warming a man to his very depths and spurring him on to much more than his very best; while the quiet strength, the patient routine, the unobtrusive labors of Joseph would make more plain to Mary the fineness of the man and the reckless generosity of his love, more plain even⁸ than in the days of her espousals, of Bethlehem and of Egypt."

Joseph's vocation is unique. The Dominican, Isidore de Isolanis, who wrote the first theological treatise on St. Joseph, places the vocation of Joseph above that of the apostles. He remarks that "the vocation of the apostles is to preach the Gospel, to enlighten souls, to reconcile them with God. The vocation of Joseph is related more closely to Christ Himself since he is the spouse of the Mother of God, the foster father and protector of the Savior."⁹

When writing about the interior life of Mary, Father Garrigou-Lagrange found it impossible not to speak also of Joseph. He speaks of the "predestination of Joseph, his eminent perfection, the character of his special mission, his virtues and his role in the sanctification of souls."¹⁰

Joseph's virtues are those of the hidden life: virginity, humility, poverty. He was patient and prudent. His faith was enlightened by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, by confidence in God and perfect charity. Joseph appears as the most humble of the saints. Bossuet says he "hid himself as much as possible from mortal eyes, enjoying with God alone the mystery revealed to him and the infinite riches of which he was the custodian."¹¹

In replying to the objection that the Mother of God was not a virgin when conceiving Christ, St. Thomas quotes Augustine as saying that "Joseph is called the father of Christ just as he is called the husband of Mary...by the mere bond of marriage, being thereby united to Him much more closely than if he were adopted from another family. Consequently, that Christ was not begotten of Joseph by fleshly union is no reason why Joseph should not be called His father. He would be the father even of an adopted son not born of his wife."¹²

In the lives of the saints we find devotion to Joseph. Teresa of Avila took Joseph for her advocate and lord. A spiritual daughter, Blessed Mary of St. Teresa, a seventeenth century Carmelite in the secular Third Order, enjoyed mystical union with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. She writes:

"My dearest Mother seems not to be satisfied with simply drawing me to the perpetual love of herself and to a very pure, tender and faithful love of Jesus. It is not enough for her to adopt me as her child. She seems to desire that I also love her dear spouse, St. Joseph. She effectively plants this love in my heart, so that my love and the inclination of my soul have these three Persons as object, although by a simple regard and in unity of spirit. They are all three constantly united in my heart and in my love.

"I contemplate Jesus, Mary and Joseph and enjoy their presence in the depth of my soul, seeing them as united for all eternity to the Divine Being with whom they are totally permeated." ¹³

Father Mary John Joseph Lataste, O.P. (1832-1869) ardently desired that Joseph would be proclaimed Patron of the Universal Church. He wrote to Pius IX to offer his life for this intention. The Holy Father commented that "more than five hundred persons have requested the proclamation, but only Père Lataste has offered his life in exchange." The proclamation was made in 1870, a year after Père Lataste's death on March 10, 1869. ¹⁴

St. Thérèse of Lisieux had a special love for Joseph. She writes: "At Our Lady of Victories I also prayed to St. Joseph, asking him to watch over me; ever since my childhood I had a devotion for him which easily merged with my love for the Blessed Virgin. I recited each day in his honor: "O Joseph, father and protector of virgins..." ¹⁵

We read in the autobiography of St. Anthony Mary Claret, an archbishop and Council Father at Vatican I, these words which he wrote under obedience: "On May 7, 1865 at 3:30 in the afternoon... Jesus told me to be very devout to St. Joseph and to approach him with confidence." ¹⁶

Blessed André Bessette, C.S.C. (Frère Andre of Mount Royal, Montreal recently beatified by Pope John Paul II, reminds us in our own times to imitate Joseph, to honor him and converse with him. His own great devotion to St. Joseph guided him and gave him complete confidence in God.

A prayerful return to Nazareth would perhaps give a new dimension to our cloistered contemplative lives as we look at the humble carpenter, the one who contemplated mysteries.

Hail Joseph, image of God the Father,
Hail Joseph, father of God the Son,
Hail Joseph, treasury of the Holy Spirit,
Hail Joseph, delight of the Most Holy Trinity.

(Pere Olier)

* * * * *

NOTES

- 1 Leo XIII, Quamquam Pluries, quoted in Garrigou-Lagrange, The Mother of the Savior, Dublin, 1948, p. 337.
- 2 New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. VII, p. 1109.
- 3 Ibid., p. 1107.
- 4 Matt.13:55
- 5 Raymond Daley, O.P., Providence Assembly, June 2, 1981.
- 6 Jn.1:45
- 7 M.J. Lagrange, O.P., The Gospel of Jesus Christ, Westminster, Md., 1938, p.55.
- 8 Walter Farrell, O.P., Only Son, New York, 1953, p.59.
- 9 Garrigou-Lagrange, op. cit., p.327.
- 10 ibid., p.322.
- 11 ibid., p.335.
- 12 Summa Theologica, III^a, question 28, art. 1, "Of the Virginity of the Mother of God".
- 13 Union with Our Lady, from the writings of Blessed Mary of St. Teresa, translated by Thomas E. McGinnis, O.Carm., New York, 1954, pp. 22-23.
- 14 Sister Mary Juan Dorcy, O.P., St. Dominic's Family, Tan Books edition, Rockford, Illinois, 1983, p. 528.
- 15 Story of a Soul, Washington, D.C., 1975, p.124.
- 16 Autobiography of St. Anthony Mary Claret, edited by José Maria Vinas, C.M.F., Chicago, 1976, p. 286.

THE ETERNAL NOW OF THE LITURGY *

Mother Mary William, O.P.
Lufkin

The Liturgy takes us into the ETERNAL NOW of God, joining us with the COMMUNION OF SAINTS, and overflowing into the CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRIT of continual prayer.

The Liturgy takes us into the ETERNAL NOW of God:

How exciting it is to realize that in our Liturgical celebrations TIME STANDS STILL, and we are caught up into the Eternal Worship of Christ before the throne of His Father! In our Liturgy we are brought into God's TRANSCENDENCE as we worship Him Whom St. Ignatius of Antioch described in his letter to Polycarp as "outside time, the Eternal One, the Unseen, Who became visible for us." In our Liturgy we are plugged into this ETERNAL DIMENSION of God.

This is expressed beautifully by Pope Pius XII in *Mediator Dei*:

By assuming our human nature the Divine Word introduced into this exile a hymn which is sung in Heaven for all eternity. He united to Himself the whole human race, and with it sings this hymn of praise to God.

In our Liturgical worship we are brought into that hymn as we join with the voice of the Whole Church.

Vatican II states that religious are called in a special way to bear witness to the heavenly realities. This we do in our Liturgy. Each morning in the Invitatory of the Divine Office we encourage one another to worship: "Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord!" If our whole life as religious is a bearing witness to the heavenly dimension of the Christian life we do this in a special way at the Liturgy, when we are lifted up into the ETERNAL NOW of our God to sing His praises.

Our very movements are the movements of Heaven! St. Gregory the Great had a vision of Heaven in which he saw the heavenly citizens divided into two choirs, singing God's praises alternately, and both choirs bowing together in praise of the Triune God. He then adopted these "heavenly rubrics" for the Benedictine monastic Liturgy; and these were later taken over by St. Dominic and other monastic founders.

As we praise God alternately in this way, "abyss calls unto abyss" - the abyss of God's eternal thoughts expressed by one choir, are answered by the other choir in its expressing of the deep words of God. We worship together in this way under the inspiration of the great Conductor of our praise - the Holy Spirit. We express sentiments of praise, love, yearning, grief, hope in the name of all men, past - present - future, all present in the ETERNAL NOW of God.

Our Liturgy thus becomes a true process of ETERNALIZATION, because in our worship Christ assumes us into His Eternal Present.

* Editor's Note: This paper was originally a Chapter talk concluding with a poetic reading accompanied by guitar. The reading is based on the reflections contained in the book THE MYSTERY OF TRANSFORMING LOVE by Adrian van Kaam. Several of her sisters encouraged Mother Mary William to submit it for publication in DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH. We are happy to reproduce it here.

Our Liturgy and the Communion of Saints:

The Liturgy addresses the person as a SOCIAL BEING, and not just as an individual separate from other individuals. The Liturgy establishes a deep union between the faithful who are still pilgrims and the just, both those in Heaven and those in Purgatory, and also between mankind and the angelic world.

In the Liturgy, weaker things are associated with the higher, terrestrial things are joined to the celestial, and that which is visible with that which is invisible, and a SINGLE UNITY IS FORMED. (St. Gregory the Great)

Our Liturgy is seen as the place of encounter, par excellence, of the Church Militant, the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant:

-the worship of the angels and saints in Heaven
-the worship of the people of God on earth
-the worship of the souls in Purgatory
FORM ONE UNIFIED WORSHIP.

The Liturgy views the whole cosmos as an integral universe united in worship: inanimate creation, we "on the way", those in glory, the angelic world - all united in giving praise and worship to the Creator in the ETERNAL NOW.

In our monastic Chapel these great realities of the Liturgy are ever before us in Jesus Hostia raised aloft in the monstrance, as a living Presence of the Sacred in our midst. In our times of adoration we are taken into the ETERNAL NOW of the Eucharistic Lord and God.

The Liturgy overflowing into Contemplative Prayer:

Our Liturgy is meant to overflow into a contemplative spirit of worship all through the day and night in continual prayer:

The intended effect of the Liturgy is THE CONTEMPLATION OF GOD, perfectly in Heaven, and even now in faith, hope and love. The Liturgy makes us "temples of contemplation" of the God Who dwells within us. (Paul Hinnebusch, O.P., . *Religious Life a Living Liturgy*)

Through the act of worship, the Sacred Liturgy directs the life of the faithful toward the contemplation of divine things. (Vatican II - *Document on the Sacred Liturgy*)

The Liturgy makes it easier for us to transcend the facts and circumstances of an earthly condition, enlarging the field of our vision, and leading us through the things that are seen, into the eternal and invisible God. (H. Clerissac, O.P., *The Spirit of St. Dominic*)

Thus, from our Liturgical prayer we are led into the contemplative Presence of God through the day, and our prayerfulness during the day will lead us back into a more fervent celebration of the Liturgy:

The whole life of the Monastery is seen as a prolongation of the Liturgical function: the silence, the habit, the customs are all a symbolic and lyric expression of the interior attitude of Liturgical worship. (V. Walgrave, O.P., *Dominican Self-Appraisal*)

If you throw yourself wholeheartedly into Liturgical prayer, it cannot fail to take possession of you, body and soul. It will color your thoughts with the varied hues of supernatural life, imbue your will and your heart with strength and love, and even stir your sensible faculties and your whole being so that you cry out: "My heart and my flesh rejoice in the Living God." (H. Clerissac, O.P., *The Spirit of St. Dominic*)

To enter into the deepest spirit of the Liturgy, the ETERNAL DIMENSION, we must bring a careful preparation and a concern for the exterior dignity and beauty of our worship. But most of all, we must bring our fervor, our recollection, our effort to "meditate in our hearts what our lips are reciting." (*Rule of St. Augustine*)

This is how St. Dominic celebrated the Liturgy: with full voice, with reverence, with burning love, with his whole soul taken up into the ETERNAL DIMENSION of worship.

Dominic seemed to pierce beyond the veil, to see standing the Lamb that was sacrificed. (W. Hinnebusch, O.P., *Renewal, in the Spirit of St. Dominic*)

Vatican II states that the Liturgy is a PRIESTLY function. St. Dominic was the great priest, and his spiritual life found its deepest inspiration in the Liturgy which formed him day by day into one who lived "as if seeing the INVISIBLE."

As followers of St. Dominic, called to mirror in our lives his prayer and fervor, we are offered a magnificent challenge in our Constitutions (#80, 81,96) to live in God's NOW moment:

-by the joyful celebration of the Liturgy which joins us, as the Pilgrim Church, to the CHURCH IN GLORY...

-and by the transfiguring process of the Liturgy which leads to the continual remembrance of God and to SEEKING HIS FACE.

The way to live in this ETERNAL DIMENSION was beautifully exemplified by one of our beloved Lufkin foundresses, Mother Mary Dominic of the Holy Cross, who radiated the truth she often shared:

Faith, quickened by the Liturgy, is like a
higher spiritual sense which allows us to hear
in the depths of our soul THE ETERNAL HARMONIES
OF HEAVEN.

WORSHIP AND THE ETERNAL PRESENCE OF GOD: A POETIC READING

O Lord, Your Presence in the Liturgy and in our hearts
begins to disclose to us
the Eternal Way.

For it begins to image in time
the Divine Life lived in eternity.

No longer do we drift along anxiously
and somewhat confused.
No longer is our life restricted to the pursuit
of some casual ambitions
or the eager fulfillment of a few vital needs.

Thanks to Your Presence
daily pursuits receive an eternal significance.

Failures and successes,
sufferings and joys
are taken up in the eternal meaning
You bestow upon our days.

The winters of life
are the dreary periods of forgetfulness
of the eternal spark within.

But, then, in the Liturgy,
You lift us beyond the protective safety zone
into the eternal spring.

No longer ingrained in our petty endeavors,
we experience in worship
how the formative thread of eternity
weaves in and through the pattern of earthly existence.
We sense the unfolding movement
of the Eternal Life within us.

When we fail to allow the spark of eternity
to shine forth in our daily doings,
we may be commended for the efficiency of performance,
for a job well-attended to,
but our voyage is no longer an inspiration to
our fellow travelers.

Only when your Eternal Life carries us,
do we sail tranquilly along
the mysterious voyage of life.

If we are in touch with the flow of Your Eternal Life,
we are able to flow gracefully with the tide
of formative events and situations.

Your mysterious Presence in our Liturgy
is the Lighthouse
that guides our frail ships
as they toss in the churning waters of history.

You want our frail barks
to glide in harmony
with the Eternal Life
that is our precious compass.

Only through You can we know
the mysteries of Divine Life.

You tell us that we are called
to share in that eternal Mystery.

In our worship
let us share more and more
the mystery of Your Presence in the
ETERNAL NOW.

And let this overflow
in the silent celebration of this Presence
in the depths of our being,
and radiated to one another day by day.

* * * * *

THIS HIDDEN LIFE ¹

Inscape of the Dominican contemplative life, taken from the writings of
Mother Teresa Maria O.P. of the Monastery of the Mother of God, Olmedo, Spain
Translation by Sr. Mary of the Holy Cross O.P., Buffalo

There is hardly a time when we feel our weakness and nothingness more acutely than when we are surrounded by the infinite mystery of God's love, made tangible to us, and deeply experienced. What are a novice's thoughts when receiving the habit? Surely she feels the mysterious and irresistible attraction of virginity. Certain Dominican concepts emerge into the foreground: light and flame ... virginity and love ... a clear and refreshing spring bubbling forth in the desert of life ... virginity ... mature youthfulness ... youthful maturity. To explore the immense field of virginity is a task for eternity. Earth yields too little time to sound its depths, we must wait for heaven. Yet we know that virginity contains within itself the power to make life radiant, to make the many lives touching our own life share in its lightness.

A novice senses the fragrance of virginity, permeating the long history of the Church. She contemplates, delightedly, the panorama of lives which have taken their flight, have transcended earth's joys and have come to rest on the heights of "the mountain of myrrh," won at the price of valiant warfare. The pilgrims who gained these peaks were not afraid of the hard, stony ground they trod with bleeding feet.

Borrowing a simile from the world of music, the novice feels herself to be a new, liquid note added to the marvelous harmonies of a symphony celebrating virginity through the centuries. For each person, virginity is something irrepeatable, elemental, rich and full of light. There are secrets as yet unexplored, to be revealed to the courageous soul determined to plunge into its crystalline waters.

Mary, Virgin most pure, presides over the clothing ceremony. She gazes lovingly at the novice, and seems to say: "See how the mystery of surrender is the mystery of lowliness. Because I was lowly, I pleased the Lord. I come to you on your feastday to show you how to live your true greatness. If you imitate me, you will learn the secret of life."

Although the reception of the habit does not bind as do vows, still, love lays claim to everything; there are no limits to our surrender. It takes but a moment to don the habit, but this moment has eternal repercussions, matching eternal love. Only in heaven will we see the true splendor of this moment, when our gaze was first fixed on eternity.

A monastery might be compared to a blazing hearth where all the sins of humankind are consumed. We want our sins, all sins, to be consumed together here. This is the meaning of our white habit -- synthesis of all colors -- and our black cappa, symbol of penitence and sorrow. Within its folds we gather our brothers and sisters from the whole world. To receive the Dominican habit is to encounter all the world's problems. There is no place for half-heartedness, unconcern. The habit means the prolongation of Jesus' life on earth: to be Jesus for everyone. It means "trying to make the Lord forget" the sins of men, to regard our poor humanity with the same look of love and compassion he cast on the prodigal son, the lost sheep, the adulteress, the sinner of Magdala. God hides himself within the folds of this habit, and from there embraces the whole world. My Dominican habit is not for me alone. It is for all mankind. It must communicate to all the depth of my adoration, the richness of my surrender to God.

Clothing day is a feast of renewal for the whole community. Actually, it is a daily event. Daily we don the habit. If at times the atmosphere seems gray, the whiteness of

our habit shines through; it gives a tone of luminous clarity to "the dark and cloudy day."² Clothing day is only the beginning. To begin is a great thing in life, but it is not everything. We set our sights on the goal, we would walk with unflagging steps, with no diminishment of our desires and ideals. Something begun in time and carried into eternity: this is the message of our Dominican habit.

Those who witness a clothing ceremony are filled with awe. A monastery reveals the footprints of God among men, and when it opens a small window to the outside world, that world may gaze through the aperture upon the truth, beauty, light, the sincere and guileless happiness within. It is fascinated by the joy it glimpses "through the lattice"³-- a joy it seeks without ever finding, since this joy is not in things, where most seek it.

Those who do not know think of a cloister as dark, sombre, colorless. But our monasteries are joyful places, where love's song unfolds without pause. All is joy, all is beauty, like our habit. Our lives are lived in hiddenness and silence, wherein the eyes of the divine Artist may enjoy what he himself has created, -- he who knows fully the intimate marvels of virginity, pure surrender and strong love, all hid within a poor, simple white tunic: our Dominican habit.⁴

NOTES:

1. This "sample from Spain" could be seen as a commentary on the Basic Constitution of the Nuns, SV.
2. Cf. Ezekiel 4: 12
3. Song of Songs, 2: 9
4. The above reflections were written before the reception of the habit became a private ceremony. Nevertheless, the spirit animating them remains the same: the habit is the symbol of inner conversion and a constant reminder of this goal.

* * * * *

THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS OUR CROSS

ANCIENT HOMILY FOR MONASTIC PROFESSION: AN INTERPRETATION¹⁾

(John Cassian - Institutes, Book 12:32-43)

Sister M. Catherine,
Elmira

After waiting for so many days in humble pleading at the entrance to the Monastery you are to be admitted today. We want you to know why we have delayed entrance and made it so difficult for you, because it will be a great help to you for your future monastic journey to understand its method so that you can embrace the service of Christ in the right way. Just as great glory is promised to those who faithfully serve God and cling to him by means of monastic observance, so shall they be punished who are cold and careless and fail to show forth the fruits of holiness which they have professed, and which outsiders expect to see in them. For it is written in Scripture: "Fulfill what you have vowed. You had better not make a vow than make it and not fulfill it" (Eccl. 5:3-4). For this reason we made your entrance into the Monastery difficult, not because we do not wholeheartedly desire your salvation and would not willingly seek out those longing for conversion to Christ, even those far off, but because we feared to act imprudently and hastily without being sure that you understood the responsibility of your profession and so might later become careless or abandon it.

Therefore, you must first learn the real reason for renunciation of the world so that you can learn how you should conduct yourself as a result. Renunciation is nothing but the concrete way to live the doctrine of the Cross. Today you die to this world and to its ways of acting, its values and attractions. As St. Paul puts it: 'You are crucified to this world and this world to you' (cf. Gal. 6:14). Ponder deeply on the Cross and its demands, for it is like a sacrament to you guiding your life from now on, since you no longer live but he lives in you who was crucified for you (cf. Gal. 2:20).²⁾ We must all, therefore, spend every moment of our lives carrying out the dying of Jesus, nailed to the cross with him in spirit (2 Cor. 4:10; Gal. 2:19). We come to know the fear of the Lord (Is. 11:2-3) through a penitential life and the mortification of all sinful attractions. These are put to death by means of the power of his redemptive death and in imitation of him. In this way we heed his word addressed to each of us: "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:38).

You might feel inclined to ask: how can a person carry his cross at all times or really accept crucifixion in himself? It is in this way: the fear of the Lord is our cross.³⁾ Now, when someone is literally nailed to a cross he loses all freedom of movement. In the same way, we must affix all of our inclinations and desires to the law of the Lord. A person dying on a cross hardly gives a thought to the pleasures of earth or to its problems and cares, or the possessions he had amassed; nor does he worry over past injuries or indulge in competition or useless ambition. He looks only to the liberation and joy which lie beyond the gates of death. So, you too should die in spirit and thought and desire not only to your sins and vices but to all attachment to the affairs of life in the world, and keep the gaze of your mind fixed on heaven where you hope to go after a brief life.⁴⁾

And so you must be very vigilant so as not to slacken your pace or turn back and take up again all that you have renounced,--whether it be family life, pleasure, material possessions or ambitions,--and rebel against the demands of Christ which lead to perfection. Turning back after putting your hand to the plow makes you unfit for his kingdom (Luke 9:62). You must be careful, too, when after effort and study you have begun to savor the words of the psalms and the knowledge of the spiritual way,⁵⁾ that you do not subtly become proud over your knowledge and lose the solid foundation of humility. Rather, once you have begun well, continue to the end in that nakedness of material and spiritual poverty of which you have made profession in the sight of God and his angels.

Recalling the patience and humility with which you awaited admittance to the Monastery, go forward steadily in these virtues, for he who perseveres to the end will be saved (Matt. 24:13). The one who first tempted Adam and Eve⁶ is always waiting to trip you up; so I repeat, persevere in the humility and poverty of Christ in which you have made profession in his presence. As Scripture says: "My son, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials" (Sir. 2:1), not for repose or delightful pleasures, for "through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22) and "strait is the gate and narrow the way which leads to life and few there are who find it" (Matt. 7:14). "Many are called but few are chosen" (Matt. 20:16) to be 'the little flock to receive the inheritance' (cf. Luke 12:32).

This state of perfection can be reached in the following way.⁷ The beginning and the safeguard of salvation is fear of the Lord because it is through this gift that we are enabled to make a start at our conversion and begin to eliminate our vices and establish a life of virtue. This beginning changes our attitude so that worldly interests no longer hold the same attraction, and so lose their influence; and family ties do not dominate us. This attitude of detachment from all that is not God gradually produces humility. True humility can be discerned by the following signs: if one's natural desires and inclinations are lost in God's will; if one is utterly simple and genuine in letting one's words and actions reveal what one truly is without concealing anything out of vanity or human respect; if one is perfectly open and trusting towards others, and affable and docile to superiors, never losing patience or a gentle spirit; if one is concerned not to injure others but at the same time is able to overlook injuries done to oneself; if one has a great respect for monastic observance and is inclined to imitate the exemplary life of one's elders; if one is contented with ordinary tasks and common duties and makes no demands from an exalted opinion of oneself; if one openly acknowledges faults and is always aware of areas where one can improve one's manner of life; if one esteems others and is inclined to notice their virtues in contrast to one's own shortcomings; if one is attentive to what one says and does not talk indiscreetly or act ostentatiously so as to attract notice. The humility which slowly becomes a part of one's being as a result of this habitual way of thinking and acting will lead one to that higher plane which is love, that perfect love which knows no fear (I John 4:18). Then one is no longer concerned with punishment but delights in a virtuous life which reflects the Author of all virtue.

If you look about you, you will discover among your community some who exemplify this virtuous life, who have been tested, refined and purified. Such models of monastic life offer the best means of instruction and formation to you.⁸ But beyond this, true wisdom requires that you remain as one who is blind and deaf and dumb: blind to all that is unedifying in the behavior of others so as not to be influenced by it; deaf to any insolent or disparaging remarks so as not to imitate them, and as if you never heard them. And even if you yourself are wronged or insulted, remain silent and do not retaliate, but rather, sing in your heart the words of the psalm: "I said I will be heedful of my ways for fear I should sin with my tongue. I set a guard to my mouth when the sinner stood before me; I kept dumb and silent and refrained from rash speech" (Ps. 39:2-3). Above everything else, remember the admonition of the Apostle and take on the attitude he proposes: "Let no one delude himself. If any one of you thinks he is wise in a worldly way, he had better become a fool. In that way he will really be wise, for the wisdom of this world is absurdity with God" (I Cor. 3:18). Obey with simplicity and faith, without the calculations of the worldly wise. Then you will be secure in time of temptation. You should not expect to learn patience from the virtue of others, thinking that it is only when you find others affable and you feel well disposed and not irritated by them in any way that you will be able to practice this virtue. It is not within your power to avoid feelings of irritation. Rather, you should look for the fruits of patience from your own determined effort to practice humility and to bear with the faults of others. It is your will that matters, not their attitude or action.

I will now make a summary of all I have said so that you may be able to keep it before your mind and in your heart always. Briefly, then, this is how you can mount the heights of perfection without difficulty or strain. The beginning of our salvation and of wisdom (Ps. 111:10), as Scripture tells us, is the fear of the Lord. From the fear of the Lord comes salutary compunction of heart. From this springs renunciation, that is, absolute material and spiritual poverty. From such nakedness before God humility is born, and with this we die to all selfish desires, and so our faults are rooted out and virtues spring up in their place. When virtue is fully developed we come to know purity of heart. Finally, through purity of heart we receive the crowning grace of perfect apostolic love.⁹⁾

* * * * *

NOTES

1) This so-called "homily" is a free and selective rendering of the text of Book 12 Chapters 32 - 43 of the Institutes of John Cassian. It is the result of personal reflection at the time of my profession anniversary. It is also an attempt to present the material in these chapters as a single, continuous exhortation adapted to our modern mentality. Cassian himself presents his text as his own recollection of the words of one of the Egyptian desert Fathers, Abbot Pinufius, on the occasion of the admission of a new brother to the monastic life. The life is laid before the candidate in stark and uncompromising tones as a conversion to Christ by means of total renunciation described in terms of the cross and made possible by the gift of the fear of the Lord.

2) The author, near the beginning of his discourse, quotes the Letter of St. Paul to the Galatians (2:19-20) thus placing this human work of renunciation under the power of Christ who lives in the candidate and activates the work by divine grace. The discourse has a Christo-centric and sacramental background, implying Baptism and probably Eucharist which the early monks received daily even though the Liturgy of the Eucharist was celebrated only once or twice a week. The candidate's whole consciousness, all he does and is, must be in Christ and for Christ. His whole life is to be a conversion to Christ, a putting on of the humility and poverty of Christ. He must embrace the service of Christ, never rebel against the demands of Christ, bear the cross of Christ within himself.

3) The fear of the Lord, as it is described throughout Scripture, is basically a sense of reverence and awe in the presence of God, an attitude of worship (Deut. 10:12). It is a gift which God gives to those who are open to his Word, who listen to it and carry it out in their lives (Deut. 6:2; 8:6; Pss. 111(112):1; 118(119):63; Sir. 2:15-21). By this submission of one's will to God one comes to a certain knowledge of God from experience and to a consciousness of one's relationship with him which gradually develops into intimacy. There is a close association between fear of the Lord and the gift of wisdom. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10; Sir. 1:12; Prov. 1:7; 9:10), the root and crown of wisdom (Sir. 1:14-18), instruction in wisdom (Prov. 15:33). It produces a joyful heart (Sir. 1:9-11; Ps. 85(86):11). One who fears the Lord turns to him wholeheartedly (Sir. 21:7), trusts him always (Sir. 2:7-9; Prov. 14:26; 23:17; Ps. 24(25):12), is obedient and completely submissive to him in his revealed Word and in his human representatives (Sir. 3:8; 7:31; Prov. 24:21), and will have a right relationship with his neighbor (Lev. 19:14,32; Sir. 27:4). God's loving kindness and providence will guide him through life (Pss. 32(33):18; 102(103):11,17; Sir. 15:20; 34:14-19). It brings about repentance, healing and the favor of God (Mal. 3:7,16-17,20). In the Gospel, Jesus often exhorts his followers to this reverential fear of God (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5; Matt. 5:21-30; 18:23-35;

13:24-30; etc.). The primitive Church was known for its reverential fear of God (Acts 10:2,22,35; 2 Cor. 7:1; I Pet. 2:17; etc.). Finally, because of the Christian's new status as a child of God in Christ this reverential fear is absorbed in and perfected by love (Rom. 8:15; I John 4:18).

(The source for most of this material is: John E. Steinmueller, S.T.D. and Kathryn Sullivan, R.S.C.J., Ph.D., "Fear of God", Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia, New York, Joseph Wagner, Inc. Vol I, 1956, p. 361 f., Vol. II, 1950, p. 234 f.)

St. Thomas Aquinas, in his Summa Theologica, gives his own analysis: "Filial fear holds the first place, as it were, among the gifts of the Holy Ghost, in the ascending order, and the last place, in the descending order...Fear cuts off the source of pride, for which reason it is bestowed as a remedy against pride. Yet it does not follow that it is the same as the virtue of humility, but that it is its origin" (II-II q.19, a 9). "This fear decreases as charity increases...since the more a man loves God, the less he fears punishment; first, because he thinks less of his own good;...secondly, because the faster he clings, the more confident he is of the reward...The fear of God not only begins but perfects wisdom, whereby we love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves" (II-II q. 19, a 10).

Thomas brings out the connection between poverty of spirit, which is the first beatitude, and the gift of fear of the Lord:

"Poverty of spirit properly corresponds to fear. Because, since it belongs to filial fear to show reverence and submission to God, whatever results from this submission belongs to the gift of fear. Now from the very fact that a man submits to God it follows that he ceases to seek greatness either in himself or in another but seeks it only in God...If a man fear God perfectly, he does not, by pride, seek greatness either in himself or in external goods, viz., honors and riches. In either case this proceeds from poverty of spirit, insofar as the latter denotes...the renunciation of worldly goods which is done in spirit, i.e., by one's own will, through the instigation of the Holy Spirit...Since a beatitude is an act of perfect virtue, all the beatitudes belong to the perfection of spiritual life. And this perfection seems to require that whoever would strive to obtain a perfect share of spiritual goods, needs to begin by despising earthly goods, wherefore fear holds the first place among the gifts. Perfection, however, does not consist in the renunciation itself of temporal goods; since this is the way to perfection: whereas filial fear, to which the beatitude of poverty corresponds, is consistent with the perfection of wisdom...whoever fears God and is subject to him, takes no delight in things other than God" (II-II q 19, a 12).

The analysis of St. Thomas helps to clarify the meaning of the gift of fear of the Lord and to situate it within the process of spiritual growth. It is the grace which initiates conversion of life (conversatio morum: one of the vows in the Benedictine monastic tradition). It is the gift which turns one around in a withdrawal from the self idolized under various forms and moves one towards God in total reverence, obedience and worship with the whole of one's being, in an all embracing attitude of humility, until the perfection of love is reached. This movement involves a renunciation of all that is not God in progressive degrees. It is expressed within fraternal relationships. Community life is the arena wherein one strips away vice and practices virtue: patience, mercy, obedience, and the candidness of absolute truth. This truth is a complete openness before God and others, without hidden agenda or defenses. All of this leads to that losing of the false, autonomous self for Christ's sake which is a true self discovery in God.

4) The monk's vision and desire is eschatological, and his break with this world is radical. He must never turn back or even look back, have no concern for this life or worldly affairs. He must fix his gaze on heaven, continually move forward by renunciation and the practice of virtue, never slacken his pace, persevere to the end. Ancient monasticism took a much more uncompromising stance towards the world than we do today. Since Vatican Council II we have been in the process of searching out the relationship of the Church to the modern world, but there is still an aspect of the world which must be totally rejected. Discernment is constantly needed in order to keep the distinction clear.

5) This is the only explicit reference to prayer, understood here as a savoring of the Psalms so that their thought and aspiration become a part of one's own mentality and orientation of heart. The term lectio divina was coined later. Prayer is to be understood more generally, in the context of the entire "homily", as that continuous and all embracing movement beginning with the fear of the Lord and ascending through purity of heart to perfect love.

6) Chapter 38 is concerned with the contrast between the first man and woman created in God's image who tarnished that image by the original sin and its effect, and the 'new man' restored to God's image in Christ who is himself the perfect image. This is a frequent theme in the Fathers. It envisages the entire plan of God in a comprehensive way as it is presented to us from the first pages of the Bible (Genesis 1-3) down through St. Paul's explanation of Christ as the new Adam.

7) The description of the spiritual ascent which makes up Chapter 39 is adapted by St. Benedict in Chapter 7 of his Rule. Benedict speaks of these steps in terms of Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:12):

"...by which we descend by exaltation and ascend by humility. Now the ladder erected is our life on earth, and if we humble our hearts the Lord will raise it to heaven" (RB 7:7-8).

It is the work of God and a total reversal of human values. It begins, as in Cassian, with the fear of the Lord and reaches the summit with "that perfect love which casts out fear" (7:67). The inbetween steps are basically the same as in Cassian with some variations. The whole is intended to indicate a progression from the internal disposition to the exterior manifestation. Cassian has 10 signs; Benedict lists 12 steps. (This information is taken from: RB 1980, Ed. Thomas Fry, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981. pp. 193-203)

St. Thomas Aquinas (ST II-II q. 161, a. 6) has an article on Benedict's scheme of humility. In his exposition he never refers to Cassian but only to Benedict:

"The inward disposition of humility leads to certain outward signs in words, deeds and gestures, which manifest that which is hidden within, as happens also with the other virtues...Wherefore the aforesaid degrees of humility include something regarding the root of humility, namely the twelfth degree, that a man fear God and bear all his commandments in mind."

Thomas continues with his enumeration of the degrees of humility, but describes them in reverse order. He concludes in his reply to Objection 2:

"Man arrives at humility in two ways. First and chiefly by a gift of grace, and in this way the inner man precedes the outward man. The other way is by human effort, whereby he first of all restrains the outward man, and afterwards succeeds in plucking out the inward root. It is according to this order that the degrees of humility are here enumerated."

8) Except for Holy Scripture, the principal source of knowledge for the early monks was the experiential wisdom exemplified and handed on by their elders and predecessors, one or more of whom was chosen by the neophyte as disciple to spiritual father. Gradually, the sayings of these holy men were transmitted orally and also written down. The primitive monastic rules had this quality of simple wisdom about them and were expressed in pithy sayings. The Rule of St. Benedict, though it came somewhat later in time, retained this quality.

9) The 'apostolic love' mentioned in the last sentence does not refer to apostolate or missionary outreach in the modern sense, or to that zeal for the salvation of others which is so characteristically Dominican. In writings which precede the middle ages the term almost always designated the imitation of the apostles as the first and exemplary followers of Christ who taught them the way to perfection.

Since, as Dominicans, we are heirs of this monastic tradition, we can find the principal themes contained in this homily traced throughout our present Constitutions. The following are notable: Christ centered focus (Basic Const. II,III,IV, V; 23, 24 II, 31 I, 40 I, 70, 80 I, 81, 87 IV, 94, 101, 108, 118 I, 118 III, 125 III); poverty (33 I, 160 II); renunciation (BC III,V, 29 I, 33 I,II, 41, 108, 125 II, 160 II); the cross (67 I, 80 IV, 125 III); seek, fix attention (BC II,IV, 13 I, 80 IV, 93,) humility (5, 70, 74, 115, 121 II, 125 II); obedience (BC VI, 23, 24 II, III, 121 I); perfection, perfect love (BC II,24, 67 II, 118 III, 125 II); silence (BC VI, 80 IV); purity of heart (BC III, 29 II); way of life:conversatio (BC II, 40 I, 118 I); eschatological thrust (BC III, 40 I, 41); prayer:psalms (BC V, 80 II); elders as formators (118 III, 121 II,III, 125 I).

* * * * *

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Time cannot dim your loveliness,
Ever-fresh flower of the height.
Hover like a beacon over our land,
Make our Faith firm and bright.

In your dark eyes where
The splendors of heaven still nest,
Pupil us there with Juan Diego,
Forever sheltered, forever blest.

Chasten in your compassionate hands
The dripping tears of penitence.
Clasp in your loving hold
Untroubled innocence.

Give each little one attention
In your welcoming grace.
Enfold in your motherly gaze
Our country, the whole human race.

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Los Angeles, CA.

ELIZABETH OF THE TRINITY AND THE INTERIOR CASTLE

Sister Mary Emily, O.P.
Lufkin

When Teresa of Avila took pen in hand to compose her greatest work, The Interior Castle, in the year 1577, she envisioned it as a structure describing the ways and stages to union with God. In the castle there are seven different categories or dwelling places, and each of these seven dwelling places has many different rooms, in order to accomodate a divergency of people and personalities. Thus, for example, although a Charles de Foucauld and a St. Francis de Sales both may experience the first dwelling places at the outset of the spiritual life, one will fit into some rooms that the other will not, since in most respects their lives were in sharp contrast to each other.

The purpose of this study is to attempt to place Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity in the dwelling places that fit her particular personality and religious orientation. It seems appropriate to do so since the etymology of the name Elizabeth means 'house of God'. It is upon this house concept that Teresa bases The Interior Castle.

"I shall now speak about that which will provide us with a basis to begin. It is that we consider our soul to be like a castle made entirely out of a diamond or a very clear crystal, in which there are many dwelling places." 1.)

The appropriateness of this placement of Elizabeth in the interior castle is further augmented by the realization that Elizabeth's principal thrust was towards the mystery of the Trinity in its relationship with the human creature predestined to share in their glory. Teresa, for her part, will let her readers see the ultimate goal a soul can hope to attain in its striving towards union with the three Divine Persons. This is nothing less than a life immersed in the Trinity and transformed into Jesus Christ. Elizabeth, through the grace of God, achieved this fullness and transformation.

If we desire another authority to affirm the clear direction that both Teresa and Elizabeth take in their quest of seeking the King in the inner dwelling of their soul, we can turn to St. John of the Cross. His words supply sufficient endorsement and provide an excellent conclusion to our introduction.

"Oh, then, soul, most beautiful among all creatures, so anxious to know the dwelling place of your Beloved that you may go in quest of Him and be united with Him, now we are telling you that you yourself are His dwelling and His sacred chamber and hiding place. This is something of immense gladness for you to see that all your good and hope is so close to you as to be within you, or better, that you cannot be without Him. Behold, exclaims the Bridegroom: 'the kingdom of God is within you.' (Lk.17:21) And His servant, the apostle St. Paul, declares: 'You are the temple of God.' (2 Cor. 6:16)" 2.)

ELIZABETH AND THE FIRST DWELLING PLACES

There are many ways of being in a place, and in the first dwelling places there are a variety of persons. Some are "paralyzed persons" and "infirm", that is, those who are not capable of entering the castle. This certainly was not true of the young Elizabeth. Her station, or dwelling place in this first stage, was that of vocal prayer and the acquisition of self-knowledge. These were the initial steps she took towards curbing her temperament.

The very young Elizabeth was a demanding, self-willed little tyrant. Father Philipon in The Spiritual Doctrine gives us an excellent picture of the three year old Elizabeth who took possession of one of the rooms in the Catez home, locked herself in, and proceeded to scream, kick and shout until her demands and wishes were gratified. 3.) Everyone admitted that this child had fire in her blood. This fire would smolder into oversensitiveness and would at times burst forth into flames of anger.

A decisive change occurred at the age of seven with the event of Elizabeth's first confession. Her eyes were opened to the truth that God was to be loved and feared. This sacramental insight of seeing herself in the light of grace set her on a clear course toward the indispensable self-knowledge and humility needed to conquer her predominant faults. From now on there were to be no offenses willingly committed and her strong will was re-oriented toward a constant and unremitting check on her quick temper and unruly nature.

Elizabeth discarded most of her diary notes, but the small collection that survives carries this entry, which was written when she was in her teens and which is indicative of all these years of personality struggle:

"Today I had the joy of offering Jesus several sacrifices with respect to my dominant fault, but how much they cost me! There I recognize my weakness. When I am unjustly reproved, I feel as though the blood were boiling in my veins. My whole being rises in revolt! But Our Lord is with me. I heard His voice deep down in my heart and then I was ready to bear everything for love of Him." 4.)

Indeed, from her confessional experiences and her growing awareness of right and wrong, Elizabeth was being riveted to grace and to a determination to conquer all her faults, through an assiduous striving towards growth in self-knowledge.

Concerning self-knowledge, as it is described in the first dwelling places, St. Teresa says:

"Knowing ourselves is something so important that I wouldn't want any relaxation ever in this regard." 5)

The lesson to be learned from the first dwelling places is conversion. Without a steadfast change of heart, without a continual return to repentance, the rest of the spiritual life will lack serious application and the enterprise will fail. The child Elizabeth took her volcanic nature by the horns; and with her inborn, strong will, combined with the help of her mother's skillful surveillance and the impetus of God's grace, she set her attention and ener-

gies towards humility and self-knowledge.

St. John of the Cross reminds us in the tenth chapter of The Ascent that, "hot water loses heat if left uncovered, and aromatic spices when unwrapped eventually lose the strength and pungency of their scent." 6) His point here coincides with Teresa's: that if we wish to progress in the love of God, we must do our part. We must search out the ways and means of removing those things that stand as obstacles to the divine love that is offered freely through the assistance of grace. This is what Elizabeth endeavored to do.

ELIZABETH AND THE SECOND DWELLING PLACES

In her first chapter of the second dwelling places, St. Teresa says God calls those persons in this second set of rooms or levels to a consideration of themselves through different means, according to what is best for the individual. For some it is through books, others through persons or through things that are heard, and yet others are called to a deeper integration with God through events, such as illness or trials. Then Teresa remarks that some are brought to God, "through a truth that He teaches during the brief moments we spend in prayer." 7)

This more profound awareness of God seems to have touched Elizabeth primarily through sacramental prayer. The few accounts that are recorded of her early encounters with God, of an interior nature, seem to be associated with the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

Her first confession, and the grace that initiated her conversion, was reviewed in the first dwelling places of this paper. Elizabeth's first Communion seems to find a niche in these second dwelling places. We see from her own words that this day was one of true enlightenment: "I am no longer hungry; Our Lord has fed me." 8) This mature appraisal from a child of nine years indicates the depths of God's loving touches in one who was still only a small bud, not yet come to flower.

The flowering, however, would begin at fourteen when, again during the reception of the Eucharist, Elizabeth was interiorly drawn to make a vow of virginity. The grace of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord made its spiritual impact on her when she heard an interior locution in the form of one word as she received the sacred Host. That one word was "Carmel" and, without a doubt, Elizabeth knew it was an indication and an invitation from her Lord to enter the Carmelite monastery. These sacramental graces strengthened Elizabeth to live the Christian life perfectly, although this was with her, as it is with all of us, a gradual process. Then too, God, through his divine Son, was preparing Elizabeth for the spiritual battles that accompany a true and sincere striving after perfection so that she might bear the likeness of Jesus.

Concerning these spiritual battles, St. Teresa says:

"The attacks made by devils in a thousand ways afflict the soul more in these rooms than in the previous ones. Here the intellect is more alive and the faculties more skilled. The blows

"from the artillery strike in such a way that the soul cannot fail to hear." 9)

There is no doubt that Elizabeth set up a full scale defensive against the enemy's attacks. The Reminiscences records the following:

"Envyng the peace of so innocent and faithful a soul, the enemy of all good tried to disturb it. In order to test his beloved child, God allowed her to go through a phase of scruples and interior suffering; but the patience of her confessor, which made her realize something of the loving-kindness of God Himself, enabled her to give him her confidence, and thus she soon recovered her peace of mind." 10)

The battle with the enemy continued on and on, so that at age thirteen we find Elizabeth penning this prayer in her diary to her patron saint as she pours out her desire for complete conquest of her faults:

"Remember, O Saint Elizabeth, my patron and heavenly protectress that I am your little charge. Come to my help in this desert land, and support me in my weakness. Give me your virtues, your gentle humility, and your sublime charity. Pray for me that God may change my faults into virtues, as once He changed the loaves you were carrying into roses." 11)

Elizabeth understood from her earliest years the indispensable role asceticism plays in the spiritual life and in the attainment of the perfection of the love of God. Her efforts seem to border on the heroic as we see in the final entry from her notes. Whether she went to these extremes or whether she was exaggerating to carry her point across, there is no way of knowing. This much is certain; she was resolute:

"During the day one can always manage to do something that is disagreeable to oneself without being noticed by others. We should never let an hour go by without making a sacrifice, even though it be only a hairpin that pulls one's hair, or a match stalk in one's shoe." 12)

Elizabeth passed through these second dwelling places with flying colors, echoing in her manner of approach the counsel of St. John of the Cross, who outlines the spirit of detachment in unequivocal terms:

"Endeavor to be inclined always:
not to the easiest, but to the most difficult;
not to the most delightful, but to the hardest;
not to the most gratifying, but to the less pleasant." 13)

ELIZABETH AND THE THIRD DWELLING PLACES

St. Teresa has the following to say at the outset of these third dwelling places:

"I believe that through the goodness of God there are many souls in the world who long not to offend his Majesty, even guarding themselves against venial sins; they spend their time well, practicing works of charity towards their neighbors, and are very balanced in their use of speech and dress and in the governing of their households - those who have them. 14)

This is certainly an accurate picture of Elizabeth as she grew into womanhood. She was still young, sixteen and seventeen. She has accustomed herself to the rigors of penance, but always in a hidden and unobtrusive manner. Prayer has become so all-consuming as to keep her attention fixed long after her companions have ceased to pray and have returned to other affairs. Her charity is such that she seems to embody St. Pauls, "all things to all men." 15) Commenting on this period in her life, Elizabeth writes:

"Being naturally very lively, I was very fond of enjoying myself, but even at that age I was on my guard during worldly amusements, on account of my disposition. However, my resolve to belong wholly to God kept me from being attracted to pleasure... When I was invited to little parties, before setting out I used to shut myself in my room for a moment's earnest prayer. I knew that I was so ardent that I ought to watch myself very carefully." (16)

By nature and by grace Elizabeth possessed an extremely strong will, but by this time it was not something forceful or obvious. Grace had so taken the ascendancy that all her efforts and struggles, as we have seen, were interior. Exteriorly she displayed a calm and graceful demeanor. This is very reminiscent of St. Teresa's words, "Don't think He (Our Lord) needs our works; He needs the determination of our wills." 17)

In these third dwelling places the individual is still working hard in the ascetical phase of the spiritual life. The epitome of this asceticism is humility, although assiduous prayer and ready penance and mortification also play a paramount role. St. Teresa writes frequently about this queen of the virtues - humility - in the third dwelling places. "This perseverance includes the condition that you consider yourselves useless servants, as St. Paul, or Christ says, and believe that you have not put Our Lord under any obligation to grant you these kinds of favors." 18)

In chapter two of the third dwelling places, St. Teresa again falls back on humility to reinforce her point:

"With humility present, this stage is a most excellent one. If humility is lacking, we will remain here our whole life - and with a thousand afflictions and miseries. For

"perfection as well as its reward does not consist in spiritual delights but in greater love and in deeds done with greater justice and truth." 20)

The touchstone of Elizabeth's humility is found in her sterling obedience, although it is also evidenced in countless other ways. Madame Catez, a profoundly good and religious woman, not only refused Elizabeth the possibility of a religious vocation, but ordered her not even to speak of it. This prohibition lasted six years and all the while Elizabeth adhered humbly to the will of God manifested through her mother. In her diary Elizabeth does not regret or take offense at her mother's decision. All she says with regard to her mother is this humble admission:

"I have thanked God from the bottom of my heart for having given me such a mother, one who was gentle and at the same time severe, and who could conquer my terrible character." 21)

St. Teresa terminates these third dwelling places by exhorting those who wish to progress to adhere to a strict obedience:

"Doing our own will is usually what harms us. And they shouldn't seek another of their own making, as they say - one who is circumspect about everything; but seek out someone who is very free from illusion about the things of this world. For in order to know ourselves, it helps a great deal to speak with someone who already knows the world for what it is." 22)

Elizabeth carried out this idea with very good balance. She sought the advice of the Canon of Carcassonne and others, including the famous Dominican Pere Irenee Vallee, who would play a major role in encouraging her spirituality of the indwelling presence which eventually completely encompassed all her other spiritual endeavors

St. John of the Cross has said, "He who wants to stand alone without the support of a master and guide, will be like the tree that stands alone in a field without a proprietor. No matter how much the tree bears, passers-by will pick the fruit before it ripens." 23) Elizabeth is a good example of this judgment of both John and Teresa. She was humble and obedient; she subjected herself to the judgment of qualified authority, both parental and priestly, as well as that of the nuns at the Carmel in Dijon, even prior to her entrance in that monastery.

ELIZABETH AND THE FOURTH DWELLING PLACES

When Elizabeth was eighteen a marvelous effect occurred in her soul. The entries in her diary relate the more profound touches of God upon the depths of her soul in prayer:

"The struggle was over by the time I was eighteen. In the midst of social gatherings, absorbed as I was by the presence of my divine Master and the thought of the morrow's Communion, I used to become as though alien and insensible to everything around me." 24)

This was clearly Elizabeth's introduction into infused prayer. She was now experiencing those mystical graces that God in his goodness desires for all who live in his grace and aspire to love him with all their hearts.

This second notation from her diary illustrates how Elizabeth was corresponding to the drawings of God's love on her soul:

"At present I am reading St. Theresa's 'Way of Perfection'. I find it immensely interesting...Prayer! How I love the way she speaks of contemplation, the degree of prayer in which God does everything (and we do nothing), when He unites our soul so closely to Himself that it is no longer we who live but God who lives in us... There I recognize the moments of sublime ecstasy to which the Master deigned to raise me so often during this retreat and again later. What can I return to Him for so many benefits! After these ecstasies, these sublime raptures during which the soul forgets everything and sees only her God, how hard and difficult ordinary prayer seems. 25)

This infused prayer, or passive recollection, that Elizabeth experienced at this point is explicated by St. Teresa in the fourth dwelling places of The Interior Castle:

"The soul, instead of striving to engage in discourses, strives to remain attentive and aware of what the Lord is working in it." 26)

Then, in her definition of this mystical prayer now begun in the soul, St. Teresa expresses it in this way:

"It seems to me that I have read where it was compared to a hedgehog curling up, or a turtle drawing into its shell." 27)

The operation of God is totally interior.

It was at this same period in Elizabeth's life that her mother relented, allowing her daughter to enter the monastery with the stipulation that she wait two more years. During this interval Elizabeth's prayer deepened. Father Philipon captures these recollected movements within Elizabeth in the following way:

"God was raising Elizabeth to the higher stages of prayer, and this was obvious when she prayed. She would be seen coming slowly up the central aisle in the parish church; she would kneel down in her place and be immediately absorbed in deep recollection. For a long time she would remain motionless, as though wholly possessed by God. Her most intimate friend was always struck by the sudden change that would come over Elizabeth the moment she entered the church to pray. 'She was no longer the same person'. " 28)

During these two years spent in anticipation of her entrance to Carmel, Elizabeth matured in the special gift of infused recollection that God had

given her. Just prior to her entrance into the monastery, Mother Marie of Jesus, a former prioress of the Dijon Carmel and foundress of the monastery in Paray-le-Monial, observed the following:

"We used to talk about prayer. Hers was quite simple and always the same. The divine Master was within her, fashioning her according to His desire. She complained that she was doing nothing, utterly held captive, as she was, by him who was doing everything." 29)

By the time Elizabeth entered her postulancy it would seem she was beginning to experience the prayer of quiet that St. Teresa speaks of in the first and second chapters of the fourth dwelling places. Here Teresa makes a clear distinction between consolations experienced in meditative prayer, and spiritual sweetness, which is characteristic of mystical or infused prayer.

St. Teresa has the following to say about consolations that are concomitant with ascetical prayer, and which come about through our own efforts:

"The water coming from the aqueducts is comparable, in my opinion, to the consolations I mentioned that are drawn from meditation. For we obtain them through thoughts, assisting ourselves, using creatures to help our meditation, and tiring the intellect. 30)

Spiritual sweetnesses in prayer are consolations of a different kind than the ones just mentioned. These begin, not with ourselves, as they did in ascetical prayer, but in this infused, more deeply recollected prayer that has its source in God. We do not bring about the spiritual sweetness, God does; He is the source and the initiator.

These spiritual sweetnesses were certainly experienced by Elizabeth from time to time. As we shall see, Elizabeth did not feast constantly on them. No, she tasted the bitter nights of faith that accompany all prayer at all stages of striving towards union with God. However, she occasionally experienced the spiritual sweetness St. Teresa speaks about in the fourth dwelling places:

"With this other fount, the water comes from its own source, which is God. And since His Majesty desires to do so - when He is pleased to grant some supernatural favor - He produces this delight with the greatest peace and quiet and sweetness in the very interior part of ourselves. I don't know from where or how, nor is that happiness and delight experienced as are earthly consolations in the heart. I mean there is no similarity at the beginning, for afterwards the delight fills everything; this water overflows through all the dwelling places and faculties until reaching the body. That is why I said that it begins in God and ends in ourselves. 31)

Before and during her postulancy, amid all the splendors of this interior absorption, Elizabeth suddenly stops short in the face of the inevitable spiritual nights. The night of the senses got off to a good start at the outset of

her year of novitiate and lasted the entire year. It hit like a raging fire to refine and purify this precious treasure. Furthermore, the night of the spirit followed quickly in the path of this first trial by fire. A dark night of faith accompanied her all the way up the ladder of prayer, rung by rung.

The Dominican theologian, Fr. Juan G. Arintero, observes that, "by this suffering (of the nights), the capacity and the will to suffer are increased." 32) St. John of the Cross would remind us that, "the purest suffering produces the purest understanding." 33) Arintero and John of the Cross both insist upon the indispensability of suffering through the nights of purification before total union with God. Now that she was acquainted with suffering and had acquired a deeper ability to understand, Elizabeth was ready to enter the fifth dwelling places.

ELIZABETH AND THE FIFTH DWELLING PLACES

In the fifth dwelling places St. Teresa does her readers a good service by comparing the life of a silk worm to that of the praying person. In her own inimitable words, Teresa describes the life cycle of the silk worm and its evolution to the butterfly stage:

"You must have already heard about His marvels manifested in the way silk originates, for only He could have invented something like that. The silkworms come from seeds about the size of little grains of pepper. When the warm weather comes and the leaves begin to appear on the mulberry tree, the seeds start to live, for they are dead until then. The worms nourish themselves on the mulberry leaves until, having grown to full size, they settle on some twigs. There with their little mouths they themselves go about spinning the silk and making some very thick little cocoons in which they enclose themselves. The silkworm, which is fat and ugly, then dies, and a little white butterfly, which is very pretty, comes forth from the cocoon." 34)

The most important emphasis here is the death of the silkworm. Teresa insists that our 'silkworm', our self love and the 'old man', the sin still in us, must die. If we let all that is contrary to grace fall away, then we will be ready to evolve into that completeness God desires for us, which is total union with himself. Thus, Teresa uses the silkworm and the butterfly as symbols to denote the complete dying to self and the total transformation process that she is encouraging in her writings.

As has been mentioned, Elizabeth was very familiar with the purifications so necessary in the spiritual life. She had become the 'silkworm' and had entered into the 'cocoon' of darkness and pain, emerging dead to the pomps of this world and its ingratiations in order to fly aloft with the freedom of a butterfly to taste the sweetness of the Lord. Yet, even though Elizabeth was tending more and more toward the condition of the butterfly, with all that Teresa expresses in that analogy, her faith was continually being tested and

would find its apex in the sixth dwelling places.

St. Teresa makes it quite clear that authentic prayer at this point is not total spiritual sweetness devoid of the nights and trials of faith. This is borne out by her words on the vicissitudes that intermingle with the delights and comforts of these regions of prayer:

"O Lord, what new trials begin for this soul! Briefly, in one way or another there must be a cross while we live, and with respect to anyone who says that after he arrived here he always enjoyed rest and delight I would say that he never arrived but that perhaps he had experienced some spiritual delight - if he had entered into the previous dwelling places and his experiences had been helped along by natural weakness or perhaps even by the devil who gives him peace so as afterward to wage much greater war against him." 35)

One of the loveliest images used by St. Teresa in The Interior Castle is that of the soul depicted as wax, with God's operation on the soul depicted as a seal. Teresa explains how she understands this union:

"Since that soul now surrenders itself into His hands and its great love makes it so surrendered that it neither knows nor wants anything more than what He wants with her (for God will never, in my judgment, grant this favor save to a soul that He takes for His own), He desires that, without its understanding how, it may go forth from this union impressed with His seal. For indeed, the soul does no more in this union than does the wax when another impresses a seal on it. The wax doesn't impress the seal in order to be disposed, it doesn't soften itself but remains still and gives its consent. O goodness of God; everything must be at a cost to You! All you want is our will and that there be no impediment in the way." 36)

This union acquired through docility results in two dispositions. The first is a deep pain felt at the way God is offended, particularly in the person of Jesus. Elizabeth felt this pain at offenses against God and expressed it in this way in regard to the Church: "I long to cover her (the Church) with the blood of the Just One; of Him who is ever living to make intercession for us and to beg his mercy!" 37)

The second disposition is that of doing the will of God. This attitude is progressively stressed throughout The Interior Castle, but here in the fifth dwelling places it reaches a solid pitch: a deeper commitment is manifested within the soul. Elizabeth's whole behavioral pattern before and during these years in Carmel was modeled upon the law of obedience. In this way she steered a clear and straight course towards union with God.

St. Teresa, with consummate wisdom, penetrates these higher regions of the spirit by emphasizing the steadfast virtue needed on the part of the individual. In those areas of deeper union of prayer and intimacy with God, the

saint of Avila could not conceive of one's being without the strong backbone of a life of virtue.

"I have said a lot on this subject elsewhere, because I see that if we fail in love of neighbor we are lost. May it please the Lord that this will never be so; for if you do not fail I tell you that you shall receive from His Majesty the union that was mentioned. When you see yourselves lacking in this love, even though you have devotion and gratifying experiences that make you think you have reached this stage, and you experience some little suspension in the prayer of quiet (for to some it then appears that everything has been accomplished), believe me, you have not reached union. And beg Our Lord to give you this perfect love of neighbor. Let His majesty have a free hand, for He will give you more than you know how to desire because you are striving and making every effort to do what you can about this love. And force your will to do the will of your Sisters in everything, even though you may lose your rights; forget your own good for their sakes no matter how much resistance your nature puts up; and when the occasion arises strive to accept work yourself so as to relieve your neighbor of it. Don't think that it won't cost you anything or that you will find everything done for you. Look at what our Spouse's love for us cost Him; in order to free us from death He died that most painful death on the cross." 38)

The Reminiscences is abundant with accounts of her virtue. Perhaps the most striking and credible account is that of one of the elderly nuns who was not at all ready to "canonize" her too soon. After a long, studied and mature scrutiny of Elizabeth, she offered this statement:

"I watched the Sister still more carefully and I was obliged to own that I had never discovered an imperfection in her. Some people have thought that a rather strong expression to use in the death notice; but it is, nevertheless, strictly true.

"Her perfection was not that of the "upright and down straight" irritating sort, but rather so humble and hidden as not to exclude some faults of weakness or inadvertance (on the part of her Sisters). All the same, I never saw her give way to any merely natural impulse. She always seemed to me not only faithful but heroic, especially under some particularly difficult circumstances." 39)

St. Teresa ends the fifth dwelling places by saying that persons who arrive at this point in the spiritual life experience an early "engagement". It is not the spiritual betrothal of the sixth dwelling places, but it is certainly a foretaste of it. It is an interior assurance on the part of the individual that if this interior fidelity to the will of God and to the love of neighbor and of the Church continues and is maintained in an all-embracing way, then betrothal to the Beloved is not far off.

St. John of the Cross sums up all of this in his expressive words:

"The Bridegroom speaks of the state in this verse saying: The bride has entered, that is, she has entered, leaving behind everything temporal and natural and all spiritual affections, modes, and manners, and has set aside and forgotten all temptations, disturbances, pains, solicitudes and cares and is transformed in this high embrace." 40)

ELIZABETH IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH DWELLING PLACES

It would be difficult to define with certainty Elizabeth's position in these lofty stages of conforming and transforming union that St. Teresa explicates in the sixth and seventh dwelling places. Yet, by reason of the purifying pains of the nights, dealt with in the first chapter of the sixth dwelling places, and the intestinal illness that crippled Elizabeth's health severely, we can tie together some threads that intimate the union she had attained with the Crucified, that ultimately led to her physical and spiritual death.

At the outset of 1906, the year Elizabeth turned 26 years of age, she remarked to the nuns at their recreation, "St. Joseph is the patron of a happy death; he will be coming to take me to the Father." 41) Thus, her ten-month trek up the hill of Calvary began. First, it was just fatigue and a sharp diminishment in appetite and inability to eat. Finally, it was confinement to the monastery infirmary and the inevitable restrictions of a dying invalid.

The Reminiscences adeptly note the variations of the theme of union that symbolized Elizabeth's state:

"Already directed towards those spiritual heights above suffering, her soul seemed continually more luminous, and despite her pain she seemed to be already dwelling in the heaven of glory. 'I felt Love beside me, like a living being,' she said, telling me: 'I wish to live in your company; for that reason I wish you to suffer without thinking you are suffering, and simply surrender yourself to My action.' " 42)

This union with the human, dying Christ produces in Elizabeth an ineffable flame of love:

"...Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity surrendered herself so fully to its action (the action of the Trinity within her) that the living flame of love which she bore in her heart was divinely wounding her. One morning she thus greeted her Prioress: 'Oh, Mother, a little more and you would not have found *Laudem Gloriae* any more!' 'How was that?' 'Yesterday evening my soul was powerless, as it were, when all at once I felt as though overwhelmed with love. No words can describe what I experienced, and at the same time it seemed to deal me a mortal wound. I think that had it been prolonged, I should have succumbed.' " 43)

This love, so expressive of Elizabeth's state at this most intense time of her life, only deepened as her body deteriorated. She seemed prepared for total consummation in the Beloved:

"It seems as though my body were hanging in a void, and my soul in darkness, but it is Love that is dealing thus with me. I know it and am glad in my heart.... If I had died in my former state of soul, it would have been too easy; it is in pure faith that I am departing and I prefer that. I am more like my Master thus, and more in the truth." 44)

St. Teresa tells us in the Seventh dwelling places that all three Divine Persons communicate themselves to those in this lofty transformation. "Laudem Gloriae", as Elizabeth liked to define herself, had now found her complete identification in Christ and her eternal absorption in "the Three". She passed to Light, Life and Love on November 9, the feast of the Dedication of a Church. It was a perfect day for the crowning of her life, dedicated to Christ and his bride, the Church.



Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity O.C.D.
(as a young girl 15 years old)

NOTES

- 1) The Interior Castle, Trans. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., The Classics of Western Spirituality, (Paulist Press: New York, 1979), The First Dwelling Places, ch. 1, No.1
- 2) The Collected Works of John of the Cross, Trans. by Kiernan Kavanaugh, O.C.D. and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. (ICS, Institute of Carmelite Studies, Washington, D.C., 1973) Canticle, Stanza 1, 7, P.418.
- 3) M.M. Philipon, O.P., The Spiritual Doctrine of Elizabeth of the Trinity, (The Newman Press, Westminster, MD, 1961) P.1.
- 4) (Mother Germaine of Jesus, O.C.D.), Reminiscences of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, (The Newman Press, Westminster, MD, 1952) P.12.

- 5) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P.43, in I, chap. 2, no.9.
- 6) The Collected Works of John of the Cross, ed. cit., The Ascent, P.94., chapt. 10, no.1.
- 7) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P.49, In II, Chap. 1, No.3
- 8) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.4.
- 9) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P.49, In II, Chap. 1, No.3
- 10) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.5.
- 11) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.6.
- 12) Ibid., P.7.
- 13) The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, ed. cit., The Ascent, P. 102, Chap. 13, No.6.
- 14) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P. 57, In III, Chap.1, No.7.
- 15) 1 Cor. 9:22.
- 16) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.10.
- 17) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P.59, In III, Chap.1, No.7.
- 18) Ibid, P.59, In III, Chap. 1, No.7.
- 19) Ibid, P.59, In III, Chap. 1, No.8.
- 20) Ibid, P.64, In III, Chap. 2, No.8.
- 21) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.11.
- 22) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P.65, In III, Chap.2, No.12
- 23) The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, ed. cit., P.667, Sayings of Light and Love, No.5
- 24) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P. 15
- 25) M.M. Philipon, O.P., Elizabeth of the Trinity, Spiritual Writings (P.J. Kenedy & Sons, New York, 1962), P.28
- 26) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P.79, In IV, Chap.3, No.4
- 27) Ibid, No.3
- 28) The Spiritual Doctrine of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, ed. cit., P.9.
- 29) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.39.
- 30) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P. 74, In IV, Chap.2, No.3
- 31) Ibid, No.4
- 32) The Very Reverend John G. Arinterro, O.P. ., The Mystical Evolution in the Development and Vitality of the Church, Vol. two (B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, MO, 1951), P.189.
- 33) The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, ed. cit., Maxims and Councils, P.678, No.48
- 34) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P. 91, In V, Chapt. 2., No.2
- 35) Ibid, P. 94, No.9
- 36) Ibid, P. 95, No.12
- 37) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P. 111.
- 38) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P. 102, No.12
- 39) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.78.
- 40) The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross, ed. cit., P.497, No.3
- 41) The Reminiscences, ed. cit., P.153
- 42) Ibid, P. 153.
- 43) Ibid, P. 155.
- 44) Ibid, P. 159
- 45) The Interior Castle, ed. cit., P. 179, VII, Chap. 2, No.6.

READING AND PRAYER

Th. Camelot, O.P.*

Translated by Sr. M. Regina, O.P.
West Springfield

Is there a crisis in the contemplative life? Among authors who have posed this question is Jean Daniélou in the article The Monastic Life and its Current Problems. (1) Certainly contemplative life in regard to cloistered women has known very serious problems in our day. No doubt the least of these are the economic and financial ones: in a society in which we do not eat unless we produce, it is with anguish that we question the status of those who have chosen to be poor and live for God alone. There is also the problem of psychological adaptation, and no matter what anyone thinks, it could not be more serious. Let's make it clear. The young women of today come from the agitation and independence of a world in which they have already taken on initiatives and responsibilities which have conditioned them to disdain the so-called passive virtues. They see themselves suddenly confronted with a lifestyle which has remained almost unchanged since the seventeenth century. The main emphasis is on silence, obedience, dependence, renouncement of one's own will and judgment. Not a word can be spoken or a gesture made without permission. If these young women do not suffocate or explode it is indeed a matter for wonder! But with a real vocation to the contemplative life and the blessing of coming to a monastery of true contemplatives animated by charity and the spirit of the Gospels, while they will doubtless experience difficulties and sufferings, personal difficulties involved in realizing the equilibrium of the life on a day to day basis, we do not think they will encounter problems with the structure which would put the fundamental basis of the traditional monastic life into question. One can count on the grace of a vocation.

First and foremost among the elements of personal equilibrium which each individual ought to realize are grace, charity and the spirit of the Gospels lived in truth. But the community as such also has elements to assure to the aspirant, one of the most necessary of these being intellectual and doctrinal formation. A contemplative community needs spiritual help. How much they are deprived of this!

As Daniélou states in his article, "contemplation, among other things, should be rooted in meditation on Scripture and the Fathers. Lectio Divina is necessary in order to nourish it. This entails intellectual work, but we must recognize that this very element is often ignored." Let us go back over these reflections in order to develop them in greater detail.

* * *

The contemplative life is most certainly the highest of vocations. It tends to realize on this earth the life of heaven and to be occupied solely in knowing and loving God. Already this life seems totally divine and, in a way, almost inhuman. Yet grave dangers are lurking: "The corruption of what is best is worst." If there are admirable attainments there are also great defects.

It is a life wholly vowed to the love of God--but is there not the risk of resting in a totally affective and purely sensible devotion where, without our

* This article originally appeared in the June 1948 issue of La Vie Spirituelle.

perceiving it, repressed instincts may find satisfaction? It is a life without any apostolic activity--but when a person is thus deprived of the benefits of action or the effective exercise of charity, is there not danger of self-centeredness? Will this contemplation be anything but introspection or a somewhat unhealthy and egotistical analysis of interior states ending in inaction and sterility or intellectual and spiritual numbness? Who can sound the abysses of boredom or morose depression that sometimes are encountered? I don't mean to be sarcastic in saying all this, but who can say that these dangers are not real?

How can we avoid catastrophes and assure the radiant opening up of true contemplation? Assuredly this can be done by a careful discernment of vocations which would eliminate self-centered temperaments and those too purely affective. In addition, we should offer a wisely balanced life, alternating choral office, silent prayer, work and common prayer, solitude and common life. Together with this belongs a solid spiritual formation which would prudently avoid all affective or cerebral exaltation and place the interior life entirely on the axle of true humility and true evangelical charity. Yet even this is not enough, if we are not concerned with giving contemplation its object.

Although the Spirit breathes where He wills, and God can and does give the gift of contemplation most often to simple souls who are truly humble and loving, it is nonetheless true that the pathways of grace normally follow the ways of human psychology. Contemplation is the activity of knowledge; a gaze of faith, a silent gaze, simple and delectable, entirely permeated with love. Yet it is a gaze which cannot be without an object. Contemplation at its summit will often be more simple than a simple regard, as a Carmelite once remarked. It is the delectable perception of the union which creates charity, where the distinction between subject and object is obscured. But to this "transobjective" contemplation, as the metaphysician would say, must we not give an objective support in some way, without which the contemplation risks losing itself in vagueness, in useless and gloomy reverie, or on the contrary in a sterile and morose introspection? An object to contemplate, to gaze on, to love: it is precisely this that many contemplative lives are deprived of, without being clearly conscious of the fact. It is this deprivation of doctrinal nourishment, this lack of an object on which to fix one's attention, that causes so many vacant, sleepy prayers - mere "exercises", arid and painful. How great is the danger of illuminism or quietism, how subtle the temptation to give oneself up to the illusions of the imagination or sensibility, or to "those deforming images which too often nourish the piety of some nuns." (2)

This object which they need does not have to be fabricated by them, nor sought by an introspective analysis of their own consciousness or even by a dialectic ascension beginning from creation. It is the mystery of God, known and loved in Christ. It is given by faith. It can never be repeated enough that contemplation is nothing but the exercise of theological faith animated by charity and enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But "faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17) If we wish to open souls to contemplation, we must give them the word of God. It is this that they hunger for above all. "Lord, give us this food always."

From the beginning spiritual reading, that is, lectio divina, was traditional in the monastic life. We read of St. Anthony the Great, in his Life by St. Athanasius, that he was assiduous in reading from his youth. (Ch. 1) He found in Scripture the secret of foiling the ruses of the devil. (Ch. 25 ff.) His disciples gave themselves up to reading no less than to fasting, psalmody and prayer. The monks of the desert of Nitria lived in the meditation of Divine Scripture and in the exercise of divine knowledge. The rule of St. Pachomius prescribed much reading and uninterrupted meditation of the word of God; at all times, whether at work, in the cell, or coming in and going out, the monks read or meditated on Scripture. (Rule 3, 6, 18, 37, 59, 60) The Treatise on Virginity, falsely attributed to Athanasius, recommends that "the virgin should have the word of God ever on her lips. At all times her work should be to meditate on Divine Scripture. She should read the Psalter and learn the psalms. The rising of the sun should find a book in her hands." Let us also recall the program of readings given by St. Jerome to the child Paula. (Ep. 107, 12)

Wishing to restore order in the monastery directed by his sister, St. Augustine, among other things, prescribed that "books should be asked for each day at the appointed times." (Ep. 211, 13) In other words, there are books which should be used every day. But at what hours should they be given out and how much time each day should be given to reading? The Regula Secunda, or Disciplina monasterii, whose connection to the "Rule" is not clearly understood, (3) gives these precise directives: "They will work from morning until Sext, and from Sext until None they will devote themselves to reading. And at None (that is, three o'clock) the books should be returned." Three hours a day given to reading! How far we are from that with our poor little half hour each day!

The Rule of St. Benedict not only provides that the brothers have time for reading and meditating on the psalter and lessons of the Office after nightly vigils (Ch. 8), and that, after the meal there is to be reading in common from the Lives of the Fathers, the Conferences of Cassian, or some other edifying book, but the time for reading is also determined in accordance with the particular seasons. Butler calculates that this affords the means of having four hours of reading each day. (4) All should be free to read on Sunday except those who have some charge. The lax and negligent who have no wish to read or are not able to do so should be sent to work even on this day, in order that they may not remain unoccupied.

To keep within one medieval text we will quote the Constitutions of the Dominican Nuns of St. Sixtus in Rome which possibly date back to St. Dominic himself. All the sisters should do manual work "except at the hours when they should occupy themselves with prayer, with reading, or the preparation of the Divine Office or chant, or the study of letters... After Vespers all should go together to collation where a reading should be made as is the custom of the Order of Citeaux." (5)

The contemplative life develops initially from the assiduous reading of the word of God. And we know that the monastic spirituality of the Middle Ages designated various degrees to the Ladder of Monks: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. (6)

The prescriptions of the rules and constitutions of religious orders concerning "spiritual reading" respond to a vital necessity and have a profoundly traditional context. Here we are concerned with an essential element of the contemplative life which ought not to be dispensed with under any pretext, even when work presses. Superiors are bound to assure their religious of this. Would you dream of closing the refectory door in order to give more time to the work of gaining daily bread? The nuns do not live on bread alone but on every word that goes forth from the mouth of God. One day a Bishop who knew the problems of religious life said: "Do you wish to know the spiritual value of a community? Ask first of all if it is faithful to spiritual reading."

There is a danger of getting too engrossed in material concerns, and this can be said even to active communities who do apostolic work. Is it always truly apostolic? Is it so absorbing that it ends up in suffocating the interior life, making it waste away from lack of air and nourishment? There is also a possibility here and there of that false humility which Danielou denounced, which is wary of all intellectual aspiration. Another subtle but real danger, which we have already mentioned, is illuminism or quietism: a sort of intellectual sloth which, under the pretext of prayer and of passivity or docility to the action of the Holy Spirit, refuses the labor of reading. If, while reading, a balanced and upright soul feels attracted to closing her book in order to listen in silence to the Interior Master who speaks without the sound of voice, no one should hinder her. But if at the beginning of religious life a person habitually substitutes a purely passive prayer for attentive and studious reading, this will without doubt become an insidious temptation to spiritual sloth. Ultimately the equilibrium of the religious life will be harmed. If we burn up the path and go too quickly in this sense, later on we may expect long periods of lethargy and spiritual sterility. How many aridities have nothing mystical about them!

* * *

The Bishop mentioned previously could have added: skim through the library catalogue and notice the books most frequently taken. This is what the visitor should examine. It would be so revealing of a community. The nuns must certainly read, but what should they read?

In the first place they should read Holy Scripture. The Bible should be read assiduously and meditation made "all day long" on that Law of God which is so lovable. (Ps. 118, 97) But the Bible is not always easy reading. (7) It demands an initiation as well as sustained labor. The nuns should be given this minimum of initiation which is absolutely indispensable, and during the years of formation a methodical study of the Bible should be provided for the novices. Study scrutinizes the human words which incarnate the Eternal Word, and tries to discover the profound divine sense hidden beneath. Only afterwards may one pause to savor at length the spiritual understanding of the sacred text and to repose in love. Assiduous, studious reading must be done first so that God's word may become familiar and connatural to the contemplative soul. (8) Let us cite some well known examples. Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity compiled a very personal collection from the texts of St. Paul, and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus would have liked to have known Greek in order to be able to read the Gospel in the original text. Neither were

animated by spiritual pride or an originality of bad alloy. The commentaries of Father LaGrange are read in monasteries, and I know of a nursing sister who carries his commentary on St. John with her on the train as she goes to visit the poor. Such assiduity cannot but bear much fruit.

After the Bible, the writings of the saints should be read, their great spiritual and doctrinal works. We are not setting up a program of spiritual reading here. (9) We wish simply to recall that a life of authentic prayer ought to be nourished from authentic sources.

We must always return to the masters, to the Fathers, and why not? The spiritual writings of St. Augustine, his Commentaries on the Psalms, the Tract on St. John, the works of Cassian or St. Gregory have nourished generations of monks; should they not be even more accessible to contemplative souls today? We are persuaded that if this studious and meditative reading exacts true labor sometimes, it will give the monastic soul the true sense of her vocation. It is well understood that the family treasures of each religious house should be exploited--the ascetical and mystical writings of the Benedictines or Cistercians, the doctors of Carmel, St. Catherine of Siena or St. Thomas Aquinas. These should be returned to continually without excluding the others. Yet we will always find an advantage in returning to the ancient authors which nourished our fathers. For example, a Dominican will always read with profit the Rule of St. Benedict or the works of Cassian, which formed the young St. Thomas Aquinas. (10)

And if there should be milk for the children, let it be pure and strong--The Story of a Soul, for example, a very great book. But the children themselves ought to grow and progress and habituate themselves to solid nourishment under penalty of remaining sensual. (Cf. 1 Cor., 3:2) It gives me a little uneasiness sometimes to see communities entirely taken up with these "messages", these "appeals" where an inspiration (without doubt authentically supernatural) is suffused in the purely affective or imaginary development which can give souls a very empty and deceitful nourishment. (11) We prefer very different works, such as The Paschal Mystery (by Bouyer), or Le mystère de Dieu. Do not these works offer more for the renewal and refreshment of their liturgical and theological life? It may be a little painful, but it will be part of the very necessary active purification of the intellect, as well as of the imagination and sensibility, by which the soul prepares herself to receive the gift of contemplation. Thus, such reading is doubly useful to the life of prayer, both for the nourishment which it provides, and for the purifications and simplifications which it brings about. (12)

Preaching and conferences must be added to reading. Here the responsibilities of ecclesiastical and religious superiors are engaged, and gravely so. At the moment of his arrest, St. Cyprian took care to put the consecrated virgins under shelter; it should be easy to transpose the example... Superiors should assure contemplatives not only of the annual retreat but also of a regular cycle of preaching and conferences. We are not speaking of pious exhortations, but of doctrinal teaching. This is indispensable and always beneficial. Even very simple souls who have little culture and are incapable of the studious reading of which we have been speaking, show that they are

very open to a commentary following and adapted to Scripture, indeed, even to the Summa of St. Thomas. Their contemplative life will be purer, deeper and more solid. This field is largely open to priestly activity, and to the religious of great apostolic orders. They will not be called on as ordinary confessors except in particular circumstances; this is a task which is properly pastoral and which risks paralyzing the liberty of their apostolic ministry. But preaching and doctrinal teaching to contemplatives is for them a choice work. Too often the children ask for bread and find no one to break it for them.

We have not yet said anything very new in recalling that assiduous reading of the Bible and the works of the saints and masters, traditional in the monastic life, is indispensable to the contemplative life; and that this studious reading demands a true intellectual effort; study and effort which should be proportioned to the measure of each, according to the proper vocation of each, but from which no one should dispense herself entirely. Even the humblest and "smallest" souls should be assured of a solid, authentic nourishment. In the world they all learned to read, to discuss, to judge. We may well say of them as of Origen's friend, that their love for Jesus is not content with a non-reasoned, common faith. They bring legitimate needs to the monastery which should be satisfied for the greatest benefit of the contemplative life itself. (13)

It is necessary here to make a clarification which is of some importance. I speak of study and intellectual effort. Jean Daniélou, in his brief article which has served as our point of departure for these reflections, spoke of intellectual work. All these words mean the same thing. They might make us believe that a female contemplative vocation, and that is what we have in view here, is an intellectual vocation, even a scientific one; and that all the monasteries ought to favor technical, biblical, patristic, theological studies. Nothing could be more false. Some years ago, an otherwise interesting work directed toward a great contemplative order, seemingly regretted that the conditions of the nuns' life, the enclosure, the grilles, etc., prevent them from doing erudite research in archives and libraries. Was the meaning of their vocation truly understood--of a life totally vowed to poverty, solitude, silence and prayer? If it is true that certain monasteries have taken a clearly studious and intellectual orientation--and they should be praised because they maintain a great and fruitful tradition, and at the same time respond to the legitimate needs of souls which are perhaps more and more numerous--it is nonetheless true that more numerous also are the souls attracted to a very humble, simple life. The contemplative life, on this point as well, can demand profound renunciations. We have stated firmly enough that reading and study ought to go before manual labor. In certain monasteries the economic conditions may be such that self support absorbs all the time that is not taken for the Office and other regular exercises. (14) Did not St. Benedict foresee this for his monks at harvest time? "They should not be afflicted because it is by this that they are truly monks living by the work of their hands as did our Fathers and the Apostles." (Rule Ch. 48)

The contemplative life can demand even more profound renunciations. A young woman is a student or professor. She becomes a Carmelite or Dominican; not without suffering perhaps, yet in joy she renounces all that has made up her life so far--just as she renounces skiing or swimming, tennis or dancing, painting or music, as she renounces social service or Catholic action. The intellect has renunciations as well as the heart and body. This is the law of the Gospel, and it holds in our times. "He who wishes to come after Me and who does not renounce all that he possesses cannot be My disciple." Without doubt, this novice will again be able to relish very high and luminous spiritual joys, but she will no longer have those long and exalting hours of work, research, discovery and assiduous association with the most beautiful works and the greatest spirits. All that will be regarded as rubbish for the sake of gaining Christ. All is past and left behind in order to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the communion with His sufferings. In days ahead she will know only humble, monotonous tasks such as sewing, sweeping and preparing vegetables. If we wish to "nakedly follow the naked Christ" we should know how to go even this far. (15)

There now remains the Word of God. Yes, certainly, this word scrutinized and savored in the conditions we have mentioned will very often procure for her joy and light. But Our Lord is terribly exacting and a jealous Master and He knows how to refuse even these joys to His spouses. I think now of a certain teacher who was an extremely cultivated person. She was famished for Scripture study and for the Fathers of the Church. She entered a great Benedictine Abbey with this in mind. Following her profession, cerebral anemia tenaciously stood in the way of any further intellectual work. She lived in this state for seventy years. The most interesting lectures seemed empty to her. Study, even the study of Scripture, meant nothing to her except a wearisome, dry exercise like all the rest. Living only in the most despoiled faith, the poor soul could do no more than be silent and listen to the Interior Master who made her taste at length a verse, a word, and that was sufficient. How could you speak to her of intellectual work? She had left all, gone beyond all; but she had found all. Here there are no more books or masters or any pathways. Toda Y Nada. It goes without question, we must keep from prematurely engaging anyone in this way. The danger of spiritual laxity is always possible and it is for the director to be on the watch. But there is also a danger of illusion and of intellectual pretension which is not imaginary and would also be disastrous. We should also keep from thinking that this studious effort would supply for the gift of contemplation and dispense the soul from humble docility to the breath of the Holy Spirit. Humility and charity are primary here. The Holy Spirit is the true and only Master and Guide in the paths of prayer. Who can oppose the Spirit of God? Who would dare, be it by study or whatever, impose on His sovereign liberty? It may well be that to deliver oneself up to intellectual labor, in spite of everything, except in the case of obedience and one's duty of state, would be to risk paralyzing and stifling the action of the Spirit, which is all liberty and spontaneity. Besides, the entire framework of the regular life, liturgy, instruction, conferences, would suffice to give this mystical contemplation the doctrinal support which it cannot do without.

And so, between a fallacious spiritual laxity and a vain pretention to acquire the secrets "revealed to little ones" simply by intellectual effort, the contemplative life, always fostered by God's Word and fixed by it on its Divine Object, ought to discover and maintain a vibrant and fruitful equilibrium.

Footnotes

- (1) Dieu vivant, 7 (1946), pp. 59-60
- (2) M.S. Gillet, O.P., Letter to the Dominican Contemplative Nuns, March 7, 1930 (Anal. S. Ord. Fr. Praed., 1930, p. 608). This important document, which has inspired us greatly here, merits to be known even outside the milieu to which it was directly addressed. We will cite some phrases here. "Intellectuals, no; but educated religious, yes... Three stages have to be passed...that of study...that of meditation...that of contemplation, in which the heart prevails over the intellect...."
- (3) Pierre Mandonnet, O.P., St. Dominic and His Work, Paris, 1937; Eng. trans. by Sr. Mary Benedicta Larkin, O.P.
- (4) C. Butler, Benedictine Monachism
- (5) For lack of a more recent edition, see the text in Balme-Lelaidier, Cartulaire ou Histoire Diplomatique de saint Dominique, Paris, 1897
- (6) Cf. Guigo II, the Carthusian, Scala Claustralium
- (7) It would seem that an introductory scripture course of a more technical nature would help to smooth out difficulties.
- (8) In La lecture sapientielle de la Bible by C. Charlier there are interesting and useful notations on the different methods of reading the bible--liturgical, cursive, meditative, doctrinal, sapiential. We insist on doctrinal reading.
- (9) The rules for novitiates generally prescribe some time for study. When this time is not absorbed by "urgent" manual work, it is often more or less exclusively consecrated to the study of the constitutions, the rubrics and material preparation for the Office, etc. Shall we dare to say that this is not the study that souls need, and it does not suffice for the biblical and doctrinal nourishment of their prayer?
- (10) Under the heading of curiosity and as an example of wise eclecticism, we cite here the readings which Bl. Humbert recommended to the Dominican novices as being most apt to "form, enkindle and strengthen them": the book of Hugh (of St. Victor?) on The Discipline, the Cloister of the Soul; the Meditations of St. Bernard; the Meditations and Prayers of St. Anselm; the Confessions of St. Augustine; the Conferences of Cassian; the Lives and Sayings of the Fathers; the Passions and Legends of the saints; the Letter to the Brethren of Mt. Dieu, by William of St. Thierry; the Degrees of Pride and the Book on the Love of God, both by St. Bernard; the Book of Balaam; the Treatise on the Virtues and Vices, etc. (De officiis ordinis, ch. V, De officio magistri noviciorum, XVIII. Ed. Berthier, Rome, 1889)
- (11) cf. the severe remarks of D. Basset, La Vie Spirituelle, Supplement, 2 (1947), p. 188

(12) A religious who was paralyzed and bedridden for many years said that her prayer had been simplified to one single phrase from Mystère de Dieu: "With the same intensity that God willed Himself, God willed us for Himself." This spoke less to the heart than "my little prey", but it is perhaps more true and sane.

(13) We should speak also of reading at table. If monastic tradition has it that the night reading should keep its character of "spiritual", we do not believe that we are obliged to keep to pious works at the noonday meal, such as the traditional hagiographies. We can profit by some reading not only to relax the spirit of the nuns, but to open up their horizon-- history, biographies, apostolic or missionary activities, contemporary problems of all kinds.

All this will give them a sense of the needs of the Church and be for them a means of coming straight to their Creator. (Rule of St. Benedict, Ch. 73) And also, why not say it, to give material for recreational conversations. Charity can profit by it.

(14) A wise organization of time and the authentic practice of poverty could very often alleviate the necessity of manual work to the greater benefit of prayer and the contemplative life.

(15) It is said that in the masculine contemplative orders vowed to study, this last, by the assiduous perseverance it demands, "acriter et perseverantes", and by the renunciations it exacts, takes on an ascetic character which makes it the principal observance-- and by its influence, makes it the best preparation for prayer.



Bibliography and Book Reviews

THE BEATITUDES: SOUNDINGS IN CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS by Simon Tugwell, O.P.
Templegate, 1980, text 135 pages

"It is no good our saying, 'All I wanted was
a little piece of toast.'"

Father Tugwell tells us that this book grew out of a retreat, and by the same token many a retreat could grow out of this book. It is deep, simple, original and arresting. In his treatment of the beatitudes, Father avoids all cliches and draws his conclusions in bold strokes, making the Scriptures come alive and speak to us in challenging tones. But it is not a "shock" book; there is a contemplative calm and solidity about it that puts one at rest. A sampling or two will give the flavor:

"We cannot bring the luggage of our past with us into the new moment of God's making... as far as we are concerned, we must realize that we are like children, at the beginning, not the end, of a road."

"In response to the rather meager demands that we often make, our Lord declares, 'It has pleased your Father to give you the Kingdom' (Luke 12:32). Our expectations must expand, to become at least more adequate to God's purpose for us. It is no good our saying, 'All I wanted was a little piece of toast.'"

The lucid presentation of Christian traditions, ranging from the patristic ages to St. Therese of Lisieux, makes this book especially appropriate for personal pondering in quiet times.

Sr. Mary Thomas, Buffalo

* * * * *

THE SUMMIT CHOIRBOOK. By the Dominican Nuns of Summit, New Jersey. Published by the same. Pages x + 534. Cloth, \$20.00, quantity discounts available.

This elegant folio size volume containing 534 hymns is primarily designed for monastic contemplative communities but will surely appeal to discerning lovers of liturgical music on a wider scale. The contents are arranged in two major parts: Part I contains hymns for the seasons of the liturgical year, followed by those for Sunday and Weekday Hours, The Commons, and Recurrent Texts, that is, several settings each of the Te Deum and the Lord's Prayer. Part II is devoted to Feasts of the Saints arranged by their dates, and of which some twenty are proper to Dominicans. These are followed by a Supplementary Section with special and topical hymns. The twenty-five pages of indexes at the back of the book will be a joy to the accompanist and director of Liturgy.

For the quality of this collection one can do no better than quote 'the unforgettable Dr. Erik Routley,' from his comments in the Foreword. He calls it "a quite unusual combination of learning and grace. ...you cannot fail to be impressed by the delicacy and precision of judgment, the modesty of style, the fastidious scholarship, and the remarkable breadth and depth of learning which distinguish the work of its learned and godly Editor. I find in these pages a poised and dignified joy..."

As to format, the accompaniments are printed along with the melody line in the body of the hymnal. Only one line of the text is placed under the notes, which leaves the remaining stanzas in the integrity of their poetic form, a real joy for those who might like to muse later on some of the gems contained herein.

It is safe to predict that this hymnal will wear well. The selections are within reach of the average choir, yet demanding enough both textually and musically to maintain interest and effectiveness at their height. We are indebted, and will be for many generations to come, to the Nuns of Summit for their marvellous contribution to living liturgical worship.

Sister Mary Magdalen, O.P.
Farmington Hills, Michigan

* * * * *

Henri J.M. Nouwen: The Way of the Heart. Minnesota, The Seabury Press, 1981.

This book found its beginning in a seminar at Yale Divinity School. In this seminar, men and women from different religious traditions discussed the "way of the heart" as their common journey to God. Father Nouwen develops "the way" in a series of moving conferences on SOLITUDE, SILENCE, PRAYER - the traditional, core concepts of desert spirituality and ministry.

First, the author explores the meaning of solitude as a "furnace of transformation". The desert is the place of struggle against the compulsions of the false self. The book also shows how this desert, which need not be a geographical one, can also be the place of encounter with God who offers Himself as the substance of man's new self (p. 26). Solitude gives birth to compassion, and Father Nouwen singles out Saint Anthony as his key witness to this truth. He also thinks that solitude becomes universal when it is united with the God of the universe, in Christ and through Christ.

Silence completes and perfects solitude. In this chapter, the author points out that silence makes us pilgrims; it guards our inner fire; it teaches us to speak, because timely silence frees the Word for ministry. The final point, according to him, is not whether we say much or little, but whether our words call forth the compassionate silence of God Himself. Father gives emphasis to this: speech is the instrument of this present world and silence is the mystery of the world to come.

Finally, Father Nouwen challenges us to pray always, because prayer is our vocation rooted in baptism. He describes prayer as "standing before God with the mind in the heart". For Christians, the prayer of the heart is the prayer

of truth. The author presents the heart as "source of all physical, emotional, intellectual, volitional and moral energies - the center of perception and the seat of our choices. Above all, it is the ground of being where God dwells, and also the inner desert where Satan directs his fiercest attacks (p. 77).

This book shows us, in contemporary terms, how to approach the world's apocalyptic situation with hope, courage and compassion. Reading this book is like returning to a familiar and hidden spring of water, and discovering it for the first time.

Sister Maria Rose, O.P.
Summit

* * * * *

Simon Tugwell: Ways of Imperfection. Springfield, Illinois, Templegate, 1985.

Father Tugwell makes a very unusual exploration of Christian spirituality through the idea of "imperfection" --- the simple, garden-variety types of imperfection to which we are all prone. The author comes close to Saint Paul in his notion of spirituality: Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are meant to be spiritual in the sense that they live by the Spirit (Romans 8:14).

The book grew out of a series of articles published in Doctrine and Life between January 1982 and July 1983. Most of the materials have been revised to suit the present format. The cover design was executed by Linda M. Jorgensen.

Each chapter is supported by a well-annotated bibliography. One whole chapter is devoted to Blessed Humbert of Romans and the "grace of preaching". The kernel of the Christian message, however, is in Chapter 5 which deals with grace. An excellent Index is also provided at the end of the book.

Father Tugwell is a conscientious scholar. He is faithful to his sources and to the ascetical discipline of research. However, the essays fall far short of giving a history of Christian spirituality. Key movements and key figures from the fifteenth, sixteenth and eighteenth centuries are either entirely omitted or mentioned in a cursive way. The author himself explains in the Preface that the book is not a magisterial exposition on spirituality as an historical movement; it is not concerned just with prayer and asceticism. The book, basically, deals with people's perception of things and the ways in which they try to make sense of the practicalities of Christian living. Father selected materials at random from the Apostolic and Desert Fathers down to de Caussade and Saint Therese of Lisieux, who never left the "common order of things"

The author has done a good job in presenting spirituality not as some exalted mountain-top beyond the reach of the average Christian. It is the way of all flesh for saints and sinners alike in their individual quest for the God of love. The author shows how grace pushes human nature to its uttermost limits, by way of imperfections.

Sister Maria Rose, O.P.
Summit

Open Forum

A GLANCE AT THE CHARISM OF HEADSHIP

When I was hearing the tapes from the prioresses' meeting on "Authority and Obedience", I happened to be reading Community in the Lord by Father Paul Hinnebusch, O.P.

The various ideas presented in Father Paul's writings seemed to me to complement those touched upon in the lectures.

The chapter called "The Charism of Headship" was especially suited to this purpose. I have chosen some excerpts.

"The unique dignity of each individual person in the community must always be a prime consideration of every leader. (Emphasis is mine.) For the leader carries on the work of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who calls each of his sheep by name. The distinctive name of each signifies the distinctive place in the Lord's body which he can fill only by being the person the Lord wants him to be.

"Even though each one's vocation is a call to a role in the Lord's body, it is first of all a call to a direct personal relationship with the Lord himself who is the "bridegroom" - not only of the whole body, but also of each individual Christian. This call of each to personal intimacy with the Lord is always primary, and is to be respected above all else by anyone exercising leadership in the body. The leader has to be like John the Baptist, pointing only to the Lord, saying: "He must increase, I must decrease". (Jn 3:30)

"In giving direction then, the leader's aim must always be to show each person in his charge how to discern the Spirit's leadings and to follow him lovingly, how to hear the bridegroom's voice (Jn 3:29), the Good Shepherd's call (Jn 10:3) and thus become the person the Lord meant him to be.

"For the goal of all Christian leadership and spiritual direction is to show each person how to let the Holy Spirit be his director. The leader helps each to discern the Spirit in his own life, and to make personal decisions in mature responsibility. The goal of all direction is full freedom in the Spirit for the one directed, so that the one directed more and more assumes full responsibility for his personal life and for his role in the body of Christ."

Since Community in the Lord was published in 1975, (Ave Maria Press) it might be eight or nine years since you have read it. Perhaps it would be well worth reading again after pondering the presentations at the meeting on "Authority and Obedience".

For anyone who has not read this book, I found it both helpful and delightful. I especially like chapter one, "The Listening Father", about family life and the first responses of the child to the father. How beautiful it is to know that God our Father is bending over us at all times, drawing forth responses from us, waiting for our whole being to say: "Abba".

Sister Mary Rose, O.P.
West Springfield, Mass.

HOLY SCRIPTURE IN OUR LIFE

Sister Mary of the Holy Spirit, O.P.
Menlo Park

To use a current phrase which has become popular today one might say: Scripture is 'in'; it is the 'in' thing. To non-Catholic Christians this is 'old hat'. Roman Catholics, however, with their rich heritage of Truth, the Sacraments and the living Word of God in the Eucharist, allowed the Word in Scripture to remain in the shadows. Today, for many and varied reasons - one being that holy Mother Church now urges the faithful to pursue the study of the Scriptures - Scripture has come into its own in Catholic circles.

The Word of God in Scripture, as we well know, can never replace the living Word of God in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The Word of God in the sacrament is God's own Son, through whom we can all cry "Abba". "The Father uttered one Word, that Word is his Son, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The words in the Bible are the very words of this Son, the Word made flesh, the Word in the bosom of the Father before time began. Through this Word all things were made, and all inspired messages came down to us through the instrumentality of the prophets.

God's Word in Scripture leads us into the heart of truth, into love itself. One might hear it said today: "I AM in Scripture." The concern of the Lord, however, would seem to be not so much that I AM in Scripture, but whether Scripture is in me. It would do one little good to know the texts by heart, the chapters and verses where each text could be found, if the texts had not taken root in one's heart. Are we living witnesses of the Word? Do we show forth his Countenance? Do we take means to be peacemakers?

Each of us is a priest, belonging to the royal priesthood in Christ. Therefore, just as an ordained priest at the altar says: "This is my Body, this is my Blood" (Luke 22:10-20), we too, as members of the royal priesthood, must be able to say this in all truth, in the first person, in our daily lives.

"I am the light of the world...I have come that you may have life" (John 8:12; 10:10)

In our contacts with others are we light bearers? Are we among those who lay down their lives, or are we servants who demand payment of the last farthing (Matt. 18:23-35), by our "correctness", silence, or fastidious keeping of the Rule, thereby spreading not light but darkness in a bitter zeal which has no relation to Jesus?

May it be our joy to have our efforts, our dogmas, our words of Scripture coalesce so that we may be the light of Christ's countenance among all with whom we come in contact. Let us not ask if we are IN Scripture, but let us ask if Scripture is IN us, living and vibrant, so that we may spell out in daily living the unfathomable reality of Divine Love.

* * * * *

The Church tells us that, "The celebration of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass is the true origin and purpose shown to the Eucharist outside the Mass." (1) As to the Eucharistic Sacrifice itself, many of the documents of the Church have something definite to say:

The Mass is referred to as "the center and culmination of the whole life of the Christian Community." (2)

"The Eucharistic Sacrifice is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, Christians can offer the divine Victim to God and offer themselves with it." (3) And in the document on the Liturgy on celebrating the Eucharist in which, "the victory and triumph of Christ's death are made present." (4)

In the Document on the Missions we have the Eucharist as "the source of perfecting the Church." (5)

Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass which is always being perpetuated in some part of the world, Christ as Head of the Mystical Body is continually offering praise and honor to the Father in the name of all humanity through the power of the Holy Spirit. The document on the Liturgy speaks of the different forms of presence of Christ, "The same one now offering through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered Himself on the cross." (6) This statement on the Mass has not changed since the Council of Trent in 1562 or in *Mediator Dei* in 1943. Christ is present by His power in the priest at Mass by His power in the Sacraments, by His word in Holy Scripture and in the community of the faithful gathered together in Christ's name. (cf *MT. 18:20*)

If perhaps, in late years too much stress has been put on the meal or banquet part of the Mass, not giving due stress to the true element of sacrifice, this has surely not been the fault of the Council Documents but of later misinterpretations. The essence of the Mass remains the same now as when it was first instituted by Christ in its proper setting. In spite of this true understanding of the Mass by the great majority of the faithful there have been aberrations here and there that have led astray many of the weak as to the doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Species after the Mass. Still this has not affected, but rather increased the number of the true faithful to express their sound and worthy piety.

Naturally the reservation of the Eucharist for Viaticum, which the Decree tells us, "is the primary reason for reservation," led down through the years to other forms of adoration shown the Sacrament: Benediction, Holy Hours, Forty Hours Devotion, exposition periods and finally Perpetual Adoration, even public Corpus Christi Processions. All these are based on the solid foundation of properly understanding the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Mass.

The Eucharist here present in the tabernacle, or in the monstrance contains the entire spiritual treasure of the Church. Here Christ is sacramentally present, Body, Blood Soul and Divinity. Led by the Holy Spirit, all can come and unite with Christ offering His all to His Father in own name. Here all, individually can offer themselves with Him, all their joys and sorrows, their works and even all creation. In the Eucharist we are united in a very special way to the Church triumphant, and to the Holy Souls in Purgatory, straining as they are for their entrance to the company of the Blessed. We are the Mystical Body united in one Head. In silence and gratitude each person can meditate on some aspect of the self-giving sacrifice of Christ and so be stimulated to a greater spirit of loving sacrifice. It was easier for the early Christians, in a way, to hold the Mass in the truly Biblical context of sacrifice and meal, because Christ's sacrifice of Holy Thursday and Good Friday were so very poignantly close to their minds and hearts.

The Eucharist seems to be that indispensable daily need, even more so for contemplatives called to live that total self-giving necessary for community life. How otherwise can they grow in the ways of simplicity and light-heartedness, of trust and confidence, of abandonment; and so gradually become transformed into that wholeness of person, that likeness of Christ ("I live now not I, but Christ lives in me." *The Jerusalem Bible translates it thus: "I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me". Gal. 2:20*).

NOTES

1. Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship - no. 900/t3
Revision of parts entitled "Holy Communion and worship of the Eucharist outside the Mass." 1974 PP 3 & 4 - Document on Sacred Liturgy
'Sacrosanctum Concilium'
2. Document VIII *Christus Dominus* no. 30-2
3. 'Lumen Gentium' Ch. 2. no.11
4. "Sacrosanctum Concilium" Ch. I no.6
5. 'Ad Gentes' Ch. VI *Missionary cooperation* Ch. V no.39
6. "Sacrosanctum Concilium" Ch. I no.7

CONFERENCE OF NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

— MEMBER MONASTERIES

CORPUS CHRISTI MONASTERY
1230 Lafayette Ave.
Hunts Point, Bronx, N.Y. 10474
Tel. (212) 328-6996

MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY
335 Doat St.
Buffalo, N.Y. 14211
(716) 892-0066

MONASTERY OF MARY THE QUEEN
1310 W. Church St.
Elmira, N.Y. 14905
(607) 734-9506

MONASTERY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
29575 Middlebelt Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48018
(313) 626-8321

MONASTERY OF THE IMMACULATE HEART
1834 Lititz Pike
Lancaster, PA 17601
(717) 569-2104

MONASTERY OF THE ANGELS
1977 Carmen Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90068
(213) 466-2186

MONASTERY OF THE INFANT JESUS
1501 Lotus Lane
Lufkin, TX 75901
(409) 634-4233

CORPUS CHRISTI MONASTERY
215 Oak Grove Ave.
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(415) 322-1801

ST. DOMINIC'S MONASTERY
375 13th Ave.
Newark, N.J. 07103
(201) 624-2769

MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF GRACE
11 Race Hill Rd.
North Guilford, CT 06437
(203) 457-0599

MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY
543 Springfield Ave.
Summit, N.J. 07901
(201) 273-1228

DOMINICAN NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ROSARY
802 Court St.
Syracuse, N.Y. 13208
(315) 471-6762

DOMINICAN NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ROSARY
14th and West Sts.
Union City, N.J. 07087
(201) 866-7004

ST. DOMINIC'S MONASTERY
4901 16th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20011
(202) 882-4720

MONASTERY OF THE MOTHER OF GOD
1430 Riverdale St.
West Springfield, MA 01089
(413) 736-3639

— AFFILIATE MEMBER MONASTERIES

ROSARY MONASTERY
No.2 St. Ann's Rd.
Port of Spain, Trinidad, W.I.
Tel. 62-47648

MONASTERY OF OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY
Rosaryhill, Bulao, Cainta
Rizal, Philippines

— CONFERENCE COUNCIL (1984-1988)

Sister Mary of God (North Guilford) President

Sister Mary Joseph (Farmington) Vice-President
Mother Mary Joseph (Newark) Treasurer

Sister Mary Thomas (Buffalo) Secretary
Sister Mary Catherine (Elmira) Councillor
Editorial Coordinator

